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CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

"She can't last much longer. Lay into it, my buckos!"

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A CADET OF THE BLACK STAR LINE

By

RALPH D. PAINE

Author of "College Years," "The Head Coach," "The Fugitive Freshman," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY

GEORGE VARIAN

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CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

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A CADET OF THE BLACK STAR LINE

A CADET OF THE BLACK STAR LINE

CHAPTER I

OIL UPON THE WATERS

THE strength of fifteen thousand horses was driving the great Black Star liner *Roanoke* across the Atlantic toward New York. Her promenade decks, as long as a city block, swarmed with cabin passengers, while below them a thousand immigrants enjoyed the salty wind that swept around the bow. Far above these noisy throngs towered the liner's bridge as a little world set apart by itself. Full seventy feet from the sea this airy platform spanned the ship, so remote that the talk and laughter of the decks came to it only as a low murmur. The passengers were forbidden to climb to the bridge, and they seldom thought of the quiet

men in blue who, two at a time, were always pacing that canvas-screened pathway to guide the *Roanoke* to port.

Midway of the bridge was the wheel-house, in which a rugged quartermaster seemed to be playing with the spokes set round a small brass rim while he kept his eyes on the swaying compass card before him. The huge liner responded like a well-bitted horse to the touch of the bridle rein, for the power of steam had been set at work to move the ponderous rudder, an eighth of a mile away.

A lad of seventeen years was cleaning the brasswork in the wheel-house. Trimly clad in blue, his taut jersey was lettered across the chest with the word CADET. When in a cheerful mood he was as wholesome and sailorly a youngster to look at as you could have found afloat, but now he was plainly discontented with his task as with sullen frown and peevish haste he finished rubbing the speaking-tubes with cotton waste. Then as he caught up his kit he burst out:

"If my seafaring father could have lived to watch me at this fool kind of work, he'd have

been disgusted. I might better be a bell-boy in a hotel ashore at double the wages."

The quartermaster uneasily shifted his grip on the wheel and growled:

"The old man's on the bridge. No talkin' in here. Go below and tell your troubles to your little playmates, sonny."

Young David Downes went slowly down the stairway that led to the boat deck, but his loafing gait was quickened by a strong voice in his ear:

"Step lively, there. Another soft-baked landsman that has made up his mind to quit us, eh?"

The youth flushed as he flattened himself against the deck house to make room for the captain of the liner who had shrewdly read the cadet's thoughts. As he swung into the doorway of his room the brown and bearded commander flung back with a contemptuous snort: "Like all the rest of them—*no good!*"

It was the first time that Captain Thrasher had thought it worth while to speak to the humble cadet who was beneath notice among the four hundred men that made up the crew of the *Roanoke*. From afar, David had viewed

this deep-water despot with awe and dislike, thinking him as brutal as he was overbearing. Even now, as he scurried past the captain's room, he heard him say to one of the officers:

"Take the irons off the worthless hounds, and if they refuse duty again I will come down to the fire room and make them fit for the hospital."

The cadet shook his fist at the captain's door and moved on to join his companions in the fore part of the ship. He was in open rebellion against the life he had chosen only a month before. Bereft of his parents, he had lived with an uncle in New York while he plodded through his grammar-school years, after which he was turned out to shift for himself. He had found a place as a "strong and willing boy" in a wholesale dry-goods store, but his early boyhood memories recalled a father at sea in command of a stately square-rigger, and the love of the calling was in his blood. There were almost no more blue-water Yankee sailing ships and sailors, however, and small chance for an ambitious American boy afloat.

Restlessly haunting the wharves in his leisure hours, David had happened to discover that the famous Black Star Line steamers were compelled by act of Congress to carry a certain number of apprentices or "cadets," to be trained until they were fit for berths as junior officers. The news had fired him with eagerness for one of these appointments. But for weeks he faced the cruel placard on the door of the marine superintendent's office:

NO CADETS WANTED TO-DAY

At last, and he could hardly believe his eyes, when he hurried down from the Broadway store during the noon hour, the sign had been changed to read:

TWO CADETS WANTED

Partly because he was the son of a shipmaster and partly because of his frank and manly bearing, David Downes was asked for his references, and a few days later he received orders to join the *Roanoke* over the heads of thirty-odd applicants. Now he was completing his first round voyage and, alas! he had almost

decided to forsake the sea. He was ready to talk about his grievances with the four other cadets of his watch whom he found in their tiny mess room up under the bow.

"I just heard the old man threaten to half kill a couple of firemen," angrily cried David. "He is a great big bully. Why, my father commanded a vessel for thirty years without ever striking a seaman. Mighty little I'll ever learn about real seafaring aboard this marine hotel. All you have to do is head her for her port and the engines do the rest. Yet the captain thinks he's a little tin god in brass buttons and gold braid."

An older cadet, who was in his second year aboard the liner, eyed the heated youngster with a grim smile, but only observed:

"You must stay in steam if you want to make a living at sea, Davy. And as for Captain Stephen Thrasher—well, you'll know more after a few voyages."

A chubby, rosy lad dangled his short legs from a bunk and grinned approval of David's mutiny as he broke in:

"There won't be any more voyages for *this*

bold sailor boy. Acting as chambermaid for paint and brasswork doesn't fill me with any wild love for the romance of the sea. We were led aboard under false pretences, hey, David?"

"Me, too," put in another cadet. "I'm going to make three hops down the gangway as soon as we tie up in New York."

"So I am the only cadet in this watch with sand enough to stick it out," said their elder. "You *are* a mushy lot, you are. I'm going on deck to find a *man* to talk to."

As the door slammed behind him, David Downes moodily observed:

"He has no ambition, that's what's the matter with *him*." But after a while David grew tired of the chatter and horse-play of the mess room and went on deck to think over the problem he must work out for himself. Was it lack of "sand" that made him ready to quit the calling he had longed for all his life? Would he not regret the chance after he had thrown it away? But the life around him was nothing at all like the pictures of his dreams, and he was too much of a boy to look beyond the present. His ideas of the sea were

colored through and through by the memories of his father's career. He had come to hate this ugly steel monster crammed with coal and engines, which ate up her three thousand miles like an express train.

As he leaned against the rail, staring sadly out to sea, the sunlight flashed into snowy whiteness the distant royals and top-gallant sails of a square-rigger beating to the westward under a foreign flag. The boy's eyes filled with tears of genuine homesickness. Yonder was a ship worthy of the name, such as he longed to be in, but there was no place in her kind for him or his countrymen. A brown paw smote David's shoulder, and he turned to see the German bos'n. The cadet brushed a hand across his eyes, ashamed of his emotion, but the kind-hearted old seaman chuckled:

"Vat is it, Mister Downes? You vas sore on the skipper and the ship, so?"

David answered with a little break in his voice:

"It is all so different from what I expected, Peter."

"You stay mit us maybe a dozen or six voyages," returned the other, "and you guess again, boy. I did not t'ink you vas a quitter."

"But this isn't like going to sea at all," protested David.

"You mean it ist not a big man's work?" shouted the bos'n. "Mein Gott, boy, it vas full up mit splendid kinds of seamanship, what that old bundle of sticks and canvas out yonder never heard about. I know. I vas in sailin' vessels twenty years."

The bos'n waved a scornful hand at the passing ship. But David could not be convinced by empty words, and long after the bos'n had left him, he wistfully watched the square-rigger slide under the horizon, like a speck of drifting cloud.

There had been bright skies and smooth seas during the outward passage to Dover and Antwerp, and although the season was early spring the *Roanoke* had reached mid-ocean on her return voyage before the smiling weather shifted. When David was roused out to stand his four-hour watch at midnight, the liner was plunging into head seas which broke over the

forward deck and were swept aft by a gale that hurled the spray against her bridge like rain. The cadet had to fight his way to the boat deck to report to the chief officer. Climbing to the bridge he found Captain Thrasher clinging to the railing, a huge and uncouth figure in dripping oil-skins. It was impossible to see overside in the inky darkness, while the clamor of wind and sea and the pelting fury of spray made speech impossible.

The cadet crouched in the lee of the wheelhouse while the night dragged on, now and then scrambling below on errands of duty until four o'clock sounded on the ship's bell. Then he went below, drenched and shivering, to lie awake for some time and feel the great ship rear and tremble to the shock of the charging seas.

When he went on deck in daylight, he was amazed to find the *Roanoke* making no more than half speed against the storm. The white-crested combers were towering higher than her sides, and as he started to cross the well deck a wall of green water crashed over the bow, picked him up, and tossed him against a hatch,

where he clung bruised and strangling until the torrent passed. It was the sturdy bos'n who crawled forward and fetched the boy away from the ring-bolt to which he was hanging like a barnacle. As soon as he had gained shelter, David gasped:

"Did you ever see a storm as bad as this, Peter?"

"It is a smart gale of wind," spluttered the bos'n, "and two of our boats vas washed away like they vas chips already. But maybe she get worse by night."

On his reeling bridge Captain Thrasher still held his post, after an all-night vigil. The cadet was cheered at the sight of this grim and silent figure, no longer a "fair-weather sailor," but the master of the liner, doing his duty as it came to him, braced to meet any crisis. The men were going about their work as usual, and David began cleaning the salt-stained brass in the wheel-house.

When he looked out again, the chief officer was waving his arm toward the dim, gray sky-line, and at sight of David he beckoned the lad to fetch him his marine glasses. Captain

Thrasher also clawed his way to the windward side of the bridge and stared hard at the sea. The two men shouted in each other's ears, then resumed their careful scrutiny of the tempest-torn ocean in which David could see nothing but the racing billows. Presently the chief officer shook his head and folded his arms as if there was nothing more to be said or done.

After a while David made out a brown patch of something which was tossed into view for an instant and then vanished as if it would never come up again. If it were a wreck it seemed impossible that any one could be left alive in such weather as this. As the *Roanoke* forged slowly ahead, the drifting object grew more distinct. With a pair of glasses from the rack in the wheel-house, David fancied he could make out some kind of a signal streaming from the splintered stump of a mast. Captain Thrasher was pulling at his brown beard with nervous hands, but he did not stir from his place on the bridge. Presently he asked David to call the third officer. There was a consultation, and fragments of speech were blown

to the cadet's eager ears: "No use in trying to get a boat out. . . . God help the poor souls . . . she'll founder before night. . . ."

Could it be that the liner would make no effort to rescue the crew of this sinking vessel, thought David. Was this the kind of seamanship a man learned in steamers? He hated Captain Thrasher with sudden, white-hot anger. He was only a youngster, but he was ready to risk his life, just as his father would have done before him. And still the liner struggled on her course without sign of veering toward the wreck whose deck seemed level with the sea.

The forlorn hulk was dropping astern when Captain Thrasher buffeted his way to the wheel-house and stood by a speaking-tube. As if he were working out some difficult problem with himself, he hesitated, and said aloud:

"It is the only chance. But I'm afraid the vessel yonder can't live long enough to let me try it."

The orders he sent below had to do with tanks, valves, pipes, and strainers. David could not make head or tail of it. What had the engineer's department to do with saving

life in time of shipwreck? Stout-hearted sailors and a life-boat were needed to show what Anglo-Saxon courage meant. The cadet ran to the side and looked back at the wreck. He was sure that he could make out two or three people on top of her after deck house, and others clustered far forward. They might be dead for all he knew, but the pitiful distress signal beckoned to the liner as if it were a spoken message. When David went off watch he found a group of cadets as angry and impatient as himself.

"He ought to have sent a boat away two hours ago," cried one.

"I'd volunteer in a minute," exclaimed another. "The old man's lost his nerve."

The bos'n was passing and halted to roar:

"Hold your tongues, you know-noddings, you. A boat would be smashed against our side like egg-shells and lose all our people. If the wedder don't moderate pretty quick, it vas good-by and Davy Jones's locker for them poor fellers."

But the cadets soon saw that Captain Thrasher was not running away from the wreck, even though he was not trying to send aid. The

Roanoke was hovering to leeward as if waiting for something to happen. It was heart-breaking to watch the last hours of the doomed vessel. At last Captain Thrasher was ready to try his own way of sending help. The oldest cadet who was in charge of the signal locker came on deck with an armful of bunting. One by one he bent the bright flags to a halliard; they crept aloft, broke out of stops, and snapped in the wind. David, who had studied the international code in spare hours, was able to read the message:

Will stand by to give you assistance.

Only the iron discipline that ruled the liner from bridge to fire room kept the cadets from cheering. David expected to see a boat dropped from the lofty davits, but there were no signs of activity along the liner's streaming decks. It looked as if Captain Thrasher would let those helpless people drown before his eyes.

After a little the *Roanoke* began to swing very slowly off her course. Then as the seas began to smash against her weather side, she rolled until it seemed as if her funnels must be jerked out by the roots. Inch by inch, however, she

crept onward along the arc of a mile-wide circle of which the wreck was the centre. Even now David did not at all understand what the captain was trying to do. The great circle had been half-way covered before the cadet happened to notice that a band of smoother water was stretching to leeward of the steamer, and that as if by a miracle the huge combers were ceasing to break. An eddying gust brought him a strong smell of oil, and he went to the rail and stared down at the sea. The *Roanoke* heaved up her black side until he saw smears of a yellow liquid trickle from several pipes, and spread out over the frothing billows in shimmering sheets.

Slowly the *Roanoke* plunged and rolled on her circular course until she had ringed the wreck with a streak of oily calm. But still no efforts were made to attempt a rescue. The night was not far off. The gray sky was dusky and the horizon was shutting down nearer and nearer in mist and murk. Once more the liner swung her head around as if to steer a smaller circle about the helpless craft. In an agony of impatience David was praying that she might

stay afloat a little longer. Clear around this second and smaller circuit the liner wallowed until two rings of oil-streaked calm were wrapped around the wreck. Now surely, Captain Thrasher would risk sending a boat. But the bearded commander gave no orders and only shook his head now and then, as if arguing with himself.

Then for the third and last time the *Roanoke* began to weave a path around the water-logged hulk, which was so close at hand that the castaways could be counted. One, two, three aft, and three more sprawled up in the bow. One or two of them were waving their arms in feeble signals for help. A great sea washed over them, and one vanished forever. It was cruel beyond words for those who were left alone to have to watch the liner circle them time after time.

The stormy twilight was deepening into night when this third or inner circle was completed. The onset of the seas was somewhat broken when it met the outside ring of oil. Then rushing onward, the diminished breakers came to the second protecting streak and their menace

was still further lessened. Once more the sea moved on to attack the wreck, and coming to the third floating barrier the combers toppled over in harmless surf, such as that which washes the beach on a summer day when the wind is off shore.

It was possible now for the first time to launch a boat from the lee side of the liner, if the help so carefully and shrewdly planned had not come too late. Landlubber though he was, and convinced beforehand that there was no room for seamanship aboard a steamer, David Downes began to perceive the fact that Captain Thrasher knew how to meet problems which would have baffled a seaman of the old school. But even while the third officer was calling the men to one of the leeward boats, the sodden wreck dove from view and rose so sluggishly that it was plain to see her life was nearly done. The hearts of those who looked at her almost ceased to beat. It could not be that she was going to drown with help so near. As the shadows deepened across the leaden sea, David forgot that he was only a cadet, forgot the discipline that had taught him to think only

of his own duties, and rushing toward the boat he called to the third officer:

"Oh, Mr. Briggs, can't I have an oar? I can pull a man's weight in the boat. Please let me go with you."

The ruddy mate spun on his heel and glared at the boy as if about to knock him down. Just then a Norwegian seaman hung back, muttering to himself as if not at all anxious to join this forlorn hope. The mate glanced from him to the flushed face and quivering lip of the stalwart lad. Mr. Briggs was an American, and in this moment blood was thicker than water.

"Pile in amidships," said he. "You are my kind, youngster."

Mr. Briggs shoved the Norwegian headlong, and David leaped into the boat just as the creaking falls began to lower her from the davits. The boat swung between sea and sky as the liner rolled far down to leeward and back again. Then in a smother of broken water the stout life-boat met the rising sea, the automatic tackle set her free, and she was shoved away in the nick of time to escape being shattered against the steamer.

As the seven seamen and the cadet tugged madly at the sweeps and the boat climbed the slope of a green swell, Mr. Briggs shouted:

"She can't last much longer. Lay into it, my buckos. Give it to her. There's a woman on board, God bless her. I can see her skirt. No, it's a little girl. She's lashed aft with the skipper. Now break your backs. H–e–a–v–e a–l–l!"

CHAPTER II

THE SEA WAIFS

As the liner's life-boat drew nearer the foundering hulk, the men at the oars could see how fearful was the plight of the handful of survivors. The arms of a gray-haired man were clasped around a slip of a girl, whose long, fair hair whipped in the wind like seaweed. They were bound fast to a jagged bit of the mizzen-mast and appeared to be lifeless. Far forward amid a tangle of rigging and broken spars, three seamen sprawled upon the fore-castle head. If any of them were alive, they were too far gone to help save themselves.

Just beyond the innermost ring of oil-streaked sea there was a patch of quiet water, and as the boat hovered on the greasy swells, the third officer called to his men:

"One of us must swim aboard with a line."

The excited cadet, straining at his sweep,

yelled back that he was ready to try it, but the officer gruffly replied:

"This is a man's job. Bos'n, you sung out next. Over you go."

The bos'n was already knotting the end of a heaving line around his waist, and without a word he tossed the end to the officer in the stern. David Downes bent to his oar again with bitter disappointment in his dripping face. He was a strong swimmer and not afraid of the task, for this was the kind of sea life he had fondly pictured for himself. But he had to watch the bos'n battle hand-over-hand toward the wreck, the line trailing in his wake. Then a sea picked up the swimmer and flung him on the broken deck that was awash with the sea. Those in the boat feared that he had been killed or crippled by the shock, and waited tensely until his hoarse shout came back to them. They could see him creeping on hands and knees across the poop, now and then halting to grasp a block or rope's end until he could shake himself clear of the seas that buried him.

At length he gained the cabin roof, and his shadowy figure toiled desperately while he

wrenched the little girl from the arms of her protector and tied the line about her. The life-boat was warily steered under the stern as the bos'n staggered to the bulwark with his burden. With a warning cry he swung her clear. A white-backed wave caught her up and bore her swiftly toward the boat as if she were cradled. Two seamen grasped her as she was swept past them and lifted her over the gunwale.

Again the bos'n shouted, and the master of the vessel was heaved overboard and rescued with the same deft quickness. Mr. Briggs rejoiced to find that both had life in them, and forced stimulants between their locked and pallid lips, while his men rowed toward the bow of the wreck. The three survivors still left on board could no longer be seen in the gray darkness.

David Downes, fairly beside himself with pity and with anger at the sea which must surely swallow the wreck before daylight could come again, had tied the end of a second line around his middle while the boat was waiting under the stern. Now, as the mate hesitated

whether to attempt another rescue, the cadet called out:

"It's my turn next, sir. I know I can make it. Oh, won't you let me try?"

"Shut your mouth and sit still," hotly returned Mr. Briggs.

He had no more than spoken when David jumped overboard and began to swim with confident stroke toward the vague outlines of the vessel's bow. The whistle of the liner was bellowing a recall, and her signal lamps twinkled their urgent message from aloft. It was plain to read that Captain Thrasher was troubled about the safety of his boat's crew, but they doggedly hung to their station.

As for David, his strength was almost spent before he was able to fetch alongside his goal. He had never fought for his life in water like this which clubbed and choked him. By great good luck he was tossed close to a broken gap in the vessel's waist, and gained a foothold after barking his hands and knees. Half stunned, he groped his way forward until a feeble cry for help from the gloom nerved him to a supreme effort. He found the man whose

voice had guided him, and was trying to pull him toward the side when the wreck seemed to drop from under their feet. Then David felt the bow rise, rearing higher and higher, until it hung for a moment and descended in a long, sickening swoop as if it were heading straight for the bottom. There was barely time to make fast a bight of the line under the sailor's shoulders before, clinging to each other, the two were washed out to sea.

The men in the boat discerned the wild plunge of the sinking craft, and guessing that she was in the last throes, they hauled on the line with might and main. Their double burden was dragged clear, just as the bark rose once more as if doing her best to make a brave finish of it, and a few moments later there was nothing but seething water where she had been.

When David came to himself he was slumped on the bottom boards beside the groaning seaman he had saved. They were close to the *Roanoke* and her passengers were cheering from the promenade deck. It was a dangerous task to hoist the boat up the liner's side, but cool-headed seamanship accomplished it without

mishap. Several stewards and the ship's doctor were waiting to care for the rescued, and as David limped forward he caught a glimpse of the slender girl being borne toward the state-rooms of the second cabin.

Men and women passengers hurried after the cadet, for the bos'n had lost no time in telling the story, winding up with the verdict:

"A cadet vas good for somethings if you give him a chance."

Wobbly and water-logged, David dodged the ovation and steered for his bunk as fast as he was able. The other cadets of his watch shook his hand and slapped him on the back until he feebly cried for mercy, and brought him enough hot coffee and food to stock a schooner's galley.

"There will be speeches in the first cabin saloon, and the hat passed for the heroes, and maybe a medal for your manly little chest," said one of the boys. "You are a lucky pup. How did you get a chance to kick up such a fuss?"

David was proud that he had been able to play a part in a deed of real seafaring, such as

he had thought was no longer to be found in steamers. He had changed his mind. He was going to stick by the *Roanoke* and Captain Thrasher, by Jove, and with swelling heart he answered:

"I just did it, that's all, without waiting for orders. I tell you, fellows, that's the kind of thing that makes going to sea worth while, even in a tea-kettle."

"You did it without orders?" echoed the oldest cadet with a whistle of surprise. "Um–m–m! wait till the old man gets after you. You may wish you hadn't."

"What! When I saved a man's life in the dark from a vessel that went down under us? I did my duty, that is all there is to it."

"It wasn't discipline. It was plain foolishness," was the unwelcome reply. "I am mighty well pleased with you myself, but—well, there's no use spoiling your fun."

Next day the *Roanoke* was steaming full speed ahead toward the Newfoundland banks, the storm left far behind her. David Downes, every muscle stiff and sore, went on duty, still hoping that his deed would be applauded by

the ship's officers. While he scoured, cleaned, and trotted this way and that at the beck and call of the bos'n, a bebuttoned small boy in a bob-tailed jacket hailed him with this brief message:

"*He* wants to see you in his room, right away."

The cadet followed the captain's cabin boy in some fear and trembling. He found the sea lord of the *Roanoke* stretched in an arm-chair, while a steward was cutting his shoes from his feet with a sailor's knife. The captain tried to hide the pitiable condition of his swollen feet as if ashamed of being caught in such a plight, and grumbled to the steward:

"Thirty-six hours on the bridge ought not to do that. But those shoes never did fit me."

To David he exclaimed more severely:

"So you are the cadet that jumped overboard without orders. Don't do it again. If you are going to sail with us next voyage, the watch officer will see that you have no shore leave in New York. You will be on duty at the gangway while the ship is in port. What kind of a vessel would this be if all hands did as they pleased?"

Standing very stiffly in the middle of the cabin, David chewed his lip to hold back his grief and anger. Overnight he had come to love the sea and to feel that he was ready to work and wait for the slow process of promotion. But this punishment fairly crushed him. He could only stammer:

"I did the best I could to be of service, sir."

The captain's stern face softened a trifle and there was a kindly gleam in his gray eye as he said:

"I put Mr. Briggs in charge of the boat, not you. That is all now. Hold on a minute. I hope you are going to sail with us next voyage."

The cadet tried to speak but the words would not come, and he hurried on deck. After the first shock he found himself repeating the captain's final words:

"I hope you are going to sail with us next voyage."

Said David to himself a little more cheerfully:

"That means he wants me to stay with him. It is a whole lot for him to say, and more than he ever told the other fellows. Maybe I did wrong, but I'm glad of it."

He would have been in a happier frame of mind could he have overheard Captain Thrasher say to Mr. Briggs after the boy had gone forward:

"I don't want the silly passengers to spoil the boy with a lot of heroics. He has the right stuff in him. He is worth hammering into shape. I guess I knocked some of the hero nonsense out of his noddle, and now I want you to work him hard and watch how he takes his medicine."

As soon as he was again off watch, David was very anxious to go in search of the castaways, but he was forbidden to be on the passenger deck except when sent there. The captain's steward had told him that the captain of the lost bark, the *Pilgrim*, was able to lie in a steamer chair on deck, but that the little girl could not leave her berth. The bos'n was quick to read the lad's anxiety to know more about these two survivors, and craftily suggested in passing:

"Mebbe I could use one more hand mit the awnings on the promenade deck, eh?"

David was more than willing, and as he

busied himself with stays and lashings he cast his eye aft until he could see the gray-haired skipper of the *Pilgrim* huddled limply in a chair, a forlorn picture of misery and weakness. David managed to work his way nearer until he was able to greet the haggard, brooding ship-master who was dwelling more with his great loss than with his wonderful escape, as he tremulously muttered in response:

"Ten good men and a fine vessel gone. My mate and four hands went when the masts fell. The others were caught forrud. And all I owned went with her, all but my little Margaret. If it wasn't for her I'd wish I was with the *Pilgrim*."

"Is she coming around all right?" asked David, eagerly. "We were afraid we were too late."

"She's too weak to talk much, but she smiled at me," and the ship-master's seamed face suddenly became radiant. "So you were in the boat. It was a fine bit of work, and your skipper ought to be proud of you, and proud of himself. That three-ringed oil circus he invented was new to me. I thank you all from the bottom of my heart."

The cadet grinned at thought of Captain Thrasher's "pride" in him, but said nothing about his own part in the rescue and inquired in an anxious tone:

"Does the doctor think she will be able to walk ashore? Had you been dismasted and awash very long?"

"Two days," was the slow reply. "But I don't want to think of it now. My mind kind of breaks away from its moorings when I try to talk about it, and my head feels awful queer. John Bracewell is my name. I live in Brooklyn when ashore. You must come over and see us when I feel livelier."

"But about the little girl," persisted David. "Is she your granddaughter?"

"Yes, my only one, and all I have to tie to. My boy was lost at sea and his wife with him. And she is all there is left. She's sailed with me since she was ten years old. She's most thirteen now, and I never lost a man or a spar before."

The broken ship-master fell to brooding again, and there was so much grief in his tired eyes and uncertain voice that David forbore to

ask him any more questions. When he went forward again, David sought the forecastle to learn what he could about the lone seaman of the *Pilgrim's* crew. A group of *Roanoke* hands were listening to the story of the loss of the bark as told by the battered man with bandaged head and one arm in a sling who sat propped in a spare bunk. The cadets were forbidden to loaf in the forecastle, and after a word or two David lingered in the doorway, where he could hear the sailor's voice rise and fall in such fragments of his tale as these:

"Broke his heart in two to lose her . . . American-built bark of the good old times, the *Pilgrim* was . . . me the only Yankee seaman aboard, too . . . I'll ship out of New York in one of these tin pots, I guess . . . No, the old man ain't likely to find another ship. . . . He's down and out. . . . I'm sorry for him and the little girl. She's all right, she is."

The *Roanoke* was nearing port at a twenty-knot gait, and the cadets were hard at work helping to make the great ship spick and span for her stately entry at New York. Now and then David Downes found an errand to the

second cabin deck, hoping to find Captain Bracewell's granddaughter strong enough to leave her room. But he had to content himself with talking to the master of the *Pilgrim*, who was like a man benumbed in mind and body. He was all adrift and the future was black with doubts and fears. He had lived and toiled and dared in his lost bark for twenty years. David could understand something of his emotions. His father had been one of this race of old-fashioned seamen, and the boy could recall his sorrow at seeing the American sailing ships vanish one by one from the seas they had ruled. Captain Bracewell was fit for many active years afloat, but he was too old to begin at the foot of the ladder in steam vessels, and there was the slenderest hope of his finding a command in the kind of a ship he had lost.

These thoughts haunted David and troubled his sleep. But he did not realize how much he was taking the tragedy to heart until the afternoon of the last day out. He was overjoyed to see the "little girl" snuggled in a chair beside her grandfather. She was so slight and delicate by contrast with the ship-master's

rugged bulk that she looked like a drooping white flower nestled against a rock. But her eyes were brave and her smile was bright, as her grandfather called out:

"David Downes, ahoy! Here's my Margaret that wants to know the fine big boy I've been telling her so much about."

Boy and girl gazed at each other with frank interest and curiosity. Even before David had a chance to know her, he felt as if he were her big brother standing ready to help her in any time of need. Margaret was the first to speak:

"I wish I could have seen you swimming off to the poor old *Pilgrim*. Oh, but that was splendid."

David blushed and made haste to say:

"I haven't had a chance to do anything for you aboard ship. I wish I could hear how you are after you get ashore."

"You are coming over to see us before you sail, aren't you?" spoke up Captain Bracewell, with a trace of his old hearty manner.

"I'd be awful glad to," David began, and then he remembered that if he intended sticking to the *Roanoke* he must stay aboard as

punishment for trying to do his duty. So he finished very lamely. "I—I can't see you in port this time."

Margaret looked so disappointed that he stumbled through an excuse which did not mean much of anything. He had made up his mind to stay in the ship as a cadet, even though he was forbidden to be a hero. He realized, for one thing, how ashamed he would be to let these two know that he had almost decided to quit the sea. He had played a man's part and the call of the deep water had a new meaning. But it would never do to let Margaret know that his part in the *Pilgrim* rescue had got him into trouble with his captain.

David was called away from his friends, and did not see them again until evening. A concert was held in the first-class dining saloon, and the president of a great corporation, a famous author, and a clergyman of renown made speeches in praise of the heroism of the *Roanoke's* boat crew. Then the prima donna of a grand-opera company volunteered to collect a fund which should be divided among the heroes and the castaways. She returned from

her quest through the crowded saloon with a heaping basket of bank-notes and coin. There was more applause when Captain Bracewell was led forward, much against his will. But instead of the expected thanks for the generous gift, he squared his slouching shoulders and standing as if he were on his own quarter-deck, his deep voice rang out with its old-time resonance:

"You mean well, ladies and gentlemen, but my little girl and I don't want your charity. I expect to get back my health and strength, and I'm not ready for Sailor's Snug Harbor yet. We thank you just the same, though, but there's those that need it worse."

David Downes was outside, peering through an open port, for he knew that the concert was no place for a *Roanoke* "hero." He could not hear all that the captain of the *Pilgrim* had to say, but the ship-master's manner told the story. The cadet had a glimpse of Margaret sitting in a far corner of the great room. She clapped her hands when her grandfather was done speaking, and there was the same proud independence in the poise of her head. David

sighed, and as he turned away bumped into the lone seaman of the *Pilgrim* who had been gazing over his shoulder.

"He's a good skipper," said the sailor. "But he's an old fool. He's goin' to need that cash, and need it bad. All he ever saved at sea his friends took away from him ashore. My daddy and him was raised in the same town, and I know all about him."

"Do you mean they'll have to depend on his getting to sea again?" asked David.

"That's about the size of it. He's worked for wages all his life, and knowin' no more about shore-goin' folks and ways than a baby, he never risked a dollar that he didn't lose. Here's hopin' he lands a better berth than he lost."

"Aye, aye," said David.

Next morning the *Roanoke* steamed through the Narrows with her band playing, colors flying from every mast, and her passengers gay in their best shore-going clothes. David had no chance to look for Captain Bracewell and Margaret. It was sad to think of them amid this jubilant company which had scattered its wealth over Europe with lavish hand. The

contrast touched David even more as he watched Captain Thrasher give orders for swinging the huge steamer into her landing. With voice no louder than if he were talking across a dinner table, the master of the liner waved away the tugs that swarmed out to help him, and with flawless judgment turned the six hundred feet of vibrant steel hull almost in its own length and laid her alongside her pier as delicately as a fisherman handles a dory. The strength of fifteen thousand horses and the minds of four hundred men, alert and instantly obedient, did the will of this calm man on the bridge. David thrilled at the sight, and thought of Captain Bracewell, as fine a seaman in his way, but belonging to another era of the ocean.

The cadet was on duty at the gangway when the happy passengers streamed ashore to meet the flocks of waiting friends. The decks were almost deserted when the skipper of the *Pilgrim* and Margaret came along very slowly. David ran to help them. They were grateful and glad to see him, but the "little girl," could not hide her disappointment that her boy hero

was not coming to see them before he sailed. She could not understand his refusal, and when she tried to thank him for what he had done for them, there were tears in her eyes. Her grandfather had fallen back into the hopeless depression of his first day aboard. Weak and unnerved as he was, it seemed to frighten him to face the great and roaring city, in which he was only a stranded ship-master without a ship.

David tried to be cheery at parting, but his voice was unsteady as he said:

"I'll see you both again, as soon as ever I can get ashore. And you must write to me, won't you?"

Margaret's last words were:

"You will always find us together, David Downes. And we'll think of you every day and pray for you at sea."

They went slowly down the gangway and were lost in the crowd on the pier. The cadet stood looking after them and said to himself:

"I can never be really happy till he has another ship. But what in the world can I do about it?"

CHAPTER III

THE FIRE-ROOM GANG

CADET DAVID DOWNES was on watch with the fourth officer of the *Roanoke* at the forward gangway. It was their duty, while the liner lay at her pier in New York, to see that nobody came on board except on the ship's business, and to prevent attempts at smuggling by the crew. David had heard nothing from Captain Bracewell and Margaret since they went ashore three days before. They had taken such a strong hold on his affection and sympathy that he was wondering how it fared with these friends of his, when a quartermaster, returning from an evening visit to the offices ashore, handed the cadet two letters from the bundle of ship's mail.

One envelope was bordered with black and he opened it first. The letter told him of the sudden death of his uncle, who had gone to live in a Western city. This guardian had

shown little fondness for and interest in the motherless boy, and David felt more surprise than grief. But the loss made him think himself left so wholly alone that it seemed as if all his shore moorings were cut. More than ever he longed for some place to call home, and for people who would be glad to see him come back from the sea. It was with a new interest, therefore, that he read his other letter, which was signed in a very precise hand, "Margaret Hale Bracewell." In it the "little girl" told him:

DEAR DAVID DOWNES:

Grandfather wants me to write you that we are as well as could be expected and hoping very much to see you. We are boarding in the house with an old shipmate, Mr. Abel Becket, who used to sail with us. When are you coming to see us? I am most as well as ever. We have not found a ship, but Grandfather is looking round and maybe we will have good news for you next voyage. He tries to be cheerful, but is very restless and worried. I wish we were in steam instead of sail, don't you? Good luck, and I am

YOUR SINCERE AND RESPECTFUL FRIEND.

David smiled at the "we" of this stanch partnership of the *Pilgrim*, and as soon as he

was off watch he wrote a long reply, in which he told Margaret that his uncle's death made him feel as if he kind of belonged to their little family, for he had nobody else to care for and be of service to. Once or twice he thought of asking permission to leave the ship long enough to run over to Brooklyn, but new notions of discipline had been pounded into him by the events of the homeward voyage, and he decided to take his detention on board as part of the routine which made good sailors "in steam."

Two nights before sailing he happened to be left alone at the gangway, for the watch officer had been called to another part of the ship. A drizzling fog filled the harbor, and the arc lights on the pier were no more than vague blobs of sickly yellow. The cadet's attention was roused by a confused noise of shouting, singing, and swearing out toward the end of the pier shed. After making sure that the racket did not come from the ship he concluded that a riotous lot of Belgian firemen and roustabouts were making merry. When the watch officer returned, the cadet reported the unseemly noise.

A few minutes later a louder clamor arose, as if the revellers had fallen to fighting among themselves. Then a quartermaster came running forward from the after gangway.

"Dose firemen vill kill each odder," he reported. "They tries to come aboard ship and I can't stop 'em."

The officer told David to stay at his post, and hurried aft in the wake of the quartermaster. The cadet could hear seamen running from the other side of the ship to re-enforce the peace party, and presently one of them dashed up the pier as if to call the police patrol boat, which lay at the next dock. The cadet had seen enough of the fire-room force, a hundred and fifty strong, to know that the coal-passers and firemen were as brutal and disorderly men ashore as could be found in the slums of a great seaport. But such an uproar as this right alongside the ship was out of the ordinary.

While the cadet listened uneasily to the distant riot, his alert ears caught the sound of a splash, as if some heavy object had been dropped from a lower deck. On the chance that one of the crew might have fallen over, he

ran to the other side and looked down at the fog-wreathed space of water between the liner and the next pier. He could see nothing and heard no cries for help. A little later there came faintly to his ears a second splash. It somehow disquieted him. The galley force was asleep. Nothing was thrown overboard from the kitchens at this time of night and the ash-hoists were never dumped in port.

Firemen sometimes deserted ship, but no deserter would be foolish enough to swim for it in the icy water of early spring. David dared not leave his gangway more than a minute or two at a time. He wanted very much to know what was going on overside in this mysterious fashion, but there was no one in hailing distance, and the watch officer, judging by the noise in the pier, had his hands full.

David had quick hearing, and in the still, fog-bound night small sounds travelled far. Presently he fancied he heard words of hushed talk, and a new noise as if an oar had been let fall against a thwart. It was his business to see that the ship was kept clear of strangers, and

without knowing quite why, he felt sure that something wrong was going on. Finally, when he could stand the suspense no longer, he tiptoed across the deck, moved aft until he was amidships between the saloon deck houses, and crouched on a bench against the rail.

Cautiously poking his head over, he could dimly discern the outline of a small boat riding close to the ship as if she were waiting for something. She was hovering under one of the lower ports, which had been left open to resume coaling at daylight. Two or three men were moving like dark blots in the little craft. Presently a bulky object loomed above their heads and slowly descended. As if suddenly alarmed, the boat did not wait for it, but shot out in the stream, and there was the quick "lap, lap" of muffled oars. It was not long before the boat stole back, however, and seemed to be trying to pick up something adrift.

David did not know what to do. He guessed that this might be some kind of a bold smuggling enterprise, but it seemed hardly possible that anybody would risk capture in this rash and wholesale way. He was afraid of being laughed

at for his pains if he should raise an alarm. He really knew so little of this vast and complex structure called a steamship that almost any surprising performance might happen among her eight decks. It was duty to report this singular visit, however, and the officers could do the rest.

He rose from his seat and turned to recross the deck, when he was tripped and thrown on his back so suddenly that there was no time to cry out before some one was kneeling on his chest, with a choking grip on his neck. His eyes fairly popping from his head, David could only gurgle, while he tried to free himself from this attack. The man above him wore the uniform of a *Roanoke* seaman, this much the cadet could make out, but the shadowy face so close to his own was that of a stranger. He was saying something, but the lad was too dazed to understand it. At length the repetition of two or three phrases beat a slow way into David's brain:

"Forget it. Forget it. It'll be worth your while. You get your piece of it. Forget it, or overboard you go, with your head stove in."

Forget what? It was like a bad dream without head or tail, that such a thing could happen on the deck of a liner in port. Twisting desperately, for he was both quick and strong, David managed to sink his teeth in the arm nearest him. The grip on his throat weakened and he yelled with a volume of sound of which the whistle of a harbor tug might have been proud. The assailant pulled himself free, kicked savagely at the boy's head, missed it, and closed with him again as if trying to heave him overboard. But he had caught a Tartar, and David shouted lustily while he fought.

It was Captain Thrasher who came most unexpectedly to the rescue. He was on his way back from an after-theatre supper party ashore, and he launched his two hundred and thirty pounds of seasoned brawn and muscle at the intruder before the pair had heard him coming. Then his great voice boomed from one end of the ship to the other:

"On deck! Bring a pair of irons! Are all hands asleep? What's all this devil's business?"

The watch officer came running up with a quartermaster and two seamen. Without wait-

Some one was kneeling on his chest, with a choking grip on his neck.

ing for explanations they fell upon the captive whom Captain Thrasher had tucked under one arm, and handcuffed him in a twinkling. Swift to get at the heart of a matter, the captain snapped at David:

"How did it happen? Anybody with him? I know the face of that dirty murdering scoundrel."

"I was just going to report a boat alongside," gasped David.

Captain Thrasher sprang to the rail. The fog had begun to lift, and a black blotch was moving out toward the middle of the river.

"After 'em, Mr. Enos," roared the captain to the fourth officer. "Jump for the police patrol. It's the Antwerp tobacco smuggling gang. I thought we were rid of 'em."

The officer took to his heels, and in a surprisingly short time the captain saw a launch dart out from the pier beyond the *Roanoke*, her engines "chug chugging" at top speed. Making a trumpet of his hands, Captain Thrasher shouted:

"I just now lost sight of them, but the boat

was headed for the Hoboken shore. They can't get away if you look sharp."

Then the captain ordered his men to lock the captive in the ship's prison until the police came back. The chief officer was roused out and told to search the ship and to put double watches on the decks and gangways. Having taken steps to get at the bottom of the mischief, Captain Thrasher fairly picked up David and lugged him to his cabin. Dumping the lad on a divan, the master of the liner pawed him over from head to foot to make sure no bones were broken, and then remarked with great severity:

"You are more trouble than all my people put together. Disobeying orders again?"

"I guess I was, sir," faltered the cadet. "Mr. Enos told me not to budge from the gangway, and I went over to see what was going on."

"What was it? Speak up. I won't bite you," growled the captain. David told him in detail all that happened, but he did not have the wit to put two and two together. This was left for the big man with the wrathful gray eye, who fairly exploded:

"Mr. Enos is a good seaman, but his brain needs oiling. It is all as plain as the nose on your face. That row on the dock was all a blind, put up by two or three of those fire-room blackguards from Antwerp, who stand in with the gang of tobacco smugglers. They figured it out that all hands on deck would be pulled over to the port side and kept there by their infernal row, while their pals dumped the tobacco out of the starboard side. It was hidden in the coal bunkers, wrapped in rubber bags. And because the police patrol boat berths close by us, they even decoyed the whole squad away for a little while. Oh, Mr. Enos, but you *were* soft and easy."

The captain was not addressing David so much as the world in general, but the cadet could not help asking:

"How about the man that jumped on top of me?"

"He was one of them, the head pirate of the lot," said the captain. "He sneaked up from below as soon as the coast was clear, to signal his mates if anybody caught them at work with the boat."

It was worth being choked and thumped a little to be here in the captain's cabin, thought David, and to be taken into the confidence of the great man. The guest risked another question:

"Did they ever try it before, sir?"

"Every ship in the line has had trouble for years with these tobacco-running firemen. But this is the biggest thing they ever tried. Do you expect me to sit here yarning all night with a tuppenny cadet? Go to your bunk and report to me in the morning. You are a young nuisance, but you can go ashore to-morrow night, if you want to. Punishment orders are suspended. Get along with you."

David turned in with his mind sadly puzzled. One thing at least was certain. There was more in the life of a cadet than cleaning paint and brass, but was he always going to be in hot water for doing the right thing at the wrong time? Before he went to sleep he heard the police launch return, and stepped on deck long enough to see four prisoners hauled on to the landing stage.

When David went on duty next morning he noticed a little group of ill-favored and un-

kempt-looking men talking together on the end of the pier. One of them made a slight gesture, and the others turned and stared toward the cadet. Then they moved toward the street without trying to get aboard ship. Mr. Enos called David aft and told him:

"The police are watching that bunch of thugs. Two of them used to be in our fire room. All four ought to be in jail. They had something to do with the ruction last night, but they can't be identified. The bos'n tells me he thinks they got wind that you were the lad who spoiled the game for their pals. If you go ashore after dark, keep a sharp eye out. They'd love to catch you up a dark street."

David looked solemn at this, but it was too much like playing theatricals to let himself believe that he was in any kind of danger along the water front of New York. It was early evening before he was free to get into his one suit of shore-going clothes and head for Brooklyn to look for his friends, Captain Bracewell and Margaret. The bridge cars were blockaded by an accident, and after fidgeting for half an hour David decided to walk across.

There was more delay on the other side in trying to find the right street, and it was getting toward nine o'clock before he rang the bell of a small brick house in a solid block of them so much alike that they suggested a row of red pigeon-holes. A sturdy man with hair and mustache redder than his house front opened the door, and to David's rather breathless inquiry answered in a tone of dismay:

"Why, Captain John and the little girl left here this very afternoon. Bless my soul, are you the lad from the *Roanoke* they think so much of? Come aboard and sit down. No, they ain't coming back that I know of. My name is Abel Becket and I'm glad to meet you."

David followed Mr. Becket into the parlor, feeling as if the world had been turned upside down. The sympathetic sailor man hastened to add:

"They didn't expect to see you this voyage and they was all broke up about it. The old man is kind of flighty and I couldn't ha' held him here with a hawser. They could have berthed here a month of Sundays, for he has been like a daddy to me."

"But where did they go?" implored David.

"All I know is," said Mr. Becket, rubbing his chin, "that the old man came home this noon mighty glum and fretty after visitin' some ship-brokers' offices. He told me that he heard how an old ship of his, the *Gleaner*, had been cut down to a coal-barge. He was mighty fond of her, and it upset him bad. And I think he was sort of hopin' to get her again. Then he said he was going to move over to New York to be close to the shipping offices in case anything turned up, and with that him and Margaret packed up and away they flew."

"But why didn't they stay here with you, Mr. Becket? I can't understand it."

Mr. Becket laid a large hand on David's knee and exclaimed:

"Captain John is a sudden and a funny man. For one thing, I suspicion he was afraid of being stranded, and that I'd offer to lend him money or something like that. He is that touchy about taking favors from anybody that it's plumb unnatural. I'm worried that he will go all to pieces if he don't get afloat again. I

wish I could drag him back here so as to look after him."

"And how about Margaret?" David asked.

"Oh, she's feelin' fairly chirpy, and she went off with granddaddy as proud and cocksure as if they were expectin' to be offered command of a liner to-morrow."

Despite Mr. Becket's explanations, the flight of Captain Bracewell remained a good deal of a mystery to David. He could not bear to think of them adrift in New York, and he declared with decision:

"If you will give me their address, I'll look them up to-night."

"Bless my stars and buttons, I'll go along with you and make my own mind easy," announced Mr. Becket. "I won't sleep sound unless I know how they're fixed. I'm so used to thinkin' of Cap'n John as fit and ready to ride out any weather, that I don't realize he's so broke up and helpless. And I've got to go to sea before long."

The twisted streets of old Greenwich village in down-town New York proved to be a puzzle to this pair of nautical explorers, partly because

Mr. Becket had so much confidence in his ability to steer a straight course to Captain Bracewell's new quarters that he positively refused to ask his bearings of policemen or wayfarers. After they had lost themselves several times, the red-headed pilot of the expedition announced with an air of certainty:

"It's here or hereabouts. I saw the name of the street on a corner sign three or four years ago, and my memory is a wonder."

This was more cheering than definite, and David meekly suggested that he inquire at the next corner store.

"Do you think I'm scuppered yet?" snorted Mr. Becket. "Not a bit of it. Bear off to starboard at the next turn."

But once again they fetched up all standing, and Mr. Becket was obliged to confess as he meditated with hands in his pockets:

"They've gone and moved the street. That's what they've done. It's a trick they have in New York."

"You wait here and I'll go back to the cigar store around the last corner," volunteered David.

Mr. Becket was left to shout his protests while David ran up the dark and narrow street. But the cigar store was not where he expected to find it, and certain that it must be in the next block beyond, he hurried on. Two crooked streets joined in the shape of the letter Y at the second corner, and the cadet failed to notice which of these two courses he had traversed with Mr. Becket. Without knowing it, David began to head into a district filled with sailors' drinking places and cheap eating-houses. As soon as he was sure that the street was unfamiliar he slowed his pace, looked around him, and not wishing to enter a saloon, went over to a gaudily placarded "oyster house."

There were screens in front of the tables, and finding no one behind the cigar-counter David started for the rear of the room. Three rough-looking men jumped up from a table littered with bottles, and one of them cried out with an oath:

"It's the very kid himself. Leave him to me."

David dodged a chair that was flung at him like lightning, and fled for the street amid a

shower of dishes and bottles. He had recognized the unlovely face of the man who yelled at him as that of one of the *Roanoke* firemen who had stared at him from the pier in the morning. He knew he could expect no mercy at the hands of these ruffians.

The three men were at his heels as he blindly doubled the nearest corner, hoping that Mr. Becket might hear his shouts for help. But the silent, shadowy street gave back only the echoes of his own voice and the sound of furious running. The fugitive had lost all sense of direction. He was still stiff from the bruising ordeal of the *Pilgrim* wreck, and his legs felt benumbed, while the panting firemen seemed to be overhauling him inch by inch. One of them whipped out a revolver and fired. The whine of the bullet past his head made David leap aside, stumble, and lose ground. Were there no policemen in New York? It was beyond belief, thought David, that a man could be hunted for his life through the streets of a great city.

Far away David heard the rapping of nightsticks against the pavement. Help was coming,

but it might be too late, and where, oh where, was Mr. Becket? To be stamped on, kicked, and crippled by the boots of these ruffians—this was how they fought, David knew, and this was what he feared.

Two of his pursuers were lagging, but the pounding footfalls of the third were coming nearer and nearer. The street into which he had now come was lined with warehouses, their iron doors bolted, their windows dark. There was no refuge here. He must gain the water front, whose lights beckoned him like beacons. Then, as he tried to clear the curb, he tripped and fell headlong. He heard a shout of savage joy almost in his ear, just before his head crashed against an iron awning post. A blinding shower of stars filled his eyes, and David sprawled senseless where he fell.

CHAPTER IV

MR. COCHRAN'S TEMPER

DAVID DOWNES stared at the ceiling, blinked at the long windows, and squirmed until he saw a sweet-faced woman smiling at him from the doorway. She wore a blue dress and white apron, but she was not a *Roanoke* stewardess nor was this place anything like the bunk-room on shipboard. The cadet put his hands to his head and discovered that it was wrapped in bandages. Then memory began to come back, at first in scattered bits. He had been running through dark and empty streets. Men were after him. How many of his bones had they broken? He raised his knees very carefully and wiggled his toes. He was sound, then, except for his head. Oh, yes, he had banged against something frightfully hard when he fell. But why was he not aboard the *Roanoke?* She sailed at eight o'clock in the

morning. He tried in vain to sit up, and called to the nurse:

"What time is it, ma'am? Tell me, quick!"

"Just past noon, and you have been sleeping beautifully," said she. "The doctor says you can sit up to-morrow and be out in three or four days more."

"Oh! oh! my ship has sailed without me," groaned David, hiding his face in his hands. "And Captain Thrasher will think I have quit him. He knew I had a notion of staying ashore."

"You must be quiet and not fret," chided the nurse. "You got a nasty bump, that would have broken any ordinary head."

"But didn't you send word to the ship?" he implored. "You don't know what it means to me."

"You had not come to, when you were brought in, foolish boy, and there were no addresses in your pockets."

"But the captain probably signed on another cadet to take my place, first thing this morning," quavered the patient, "and—and I—I'm adrift and dis—disgraced."

The nurse was called into the hall and presently returned with the message:

"A red-headed sailor man insists upon seeing you. If you are very good you may talk to him five minutes, but no more visitors until to-morrow, understand?"

The anxious face of Mr. Becket was framed in the doorway, and at a nod from the nurse he crossed the room with gingerly tread and patted David's cheek, as he exclaimed:

"Imagine my feelin's when I read about it in a newspaper, first thing this morning. They didn't know your name, but I figured it out quicker'n scat. You must think I'm the dickens of a shipmate in foul weather, hey, boy?"

"You couldn't help it, Mr. Becket, and I'm tickled to death to see you. Please tell me what happened to me. I feel as if I was somebody else."

"Well, it was quick work, by what I read," began Mr. Becket. "And as close a shave as there ever was. Accordin' to reports, you, being a well-dressed and unknown young stranger, was rescued from a gang of drunken

roustabouts by two policemen, a big red automobile, and a prominent citizen whose name was withheld at his request, as the bright reporter puts it. The machine was coming under full power from a late ferry, and making a short cut to Broadway. It must have bowled around the corner, close hauled, just as you landed on your beam ends, and it scattered the enemy like a bum-shell. They never had a chance to see it coming. The skipper of the gasolene liner, he being the aforesaid prominent citizen, hopped out to pick you up, and had you aboard just as the police came up. So you came to the hospital in the big red wagon, the gentleman taking a fancy to your face, as far as I can make out. And so you've been turned into a regular mystery that ought to be in a book."

"But did you find Captain Bracewell?" was David's next spoken thought.

"Of course I did, after I got tired waitin' for you," and Mr. Becket's tone was aggrieved. "It was mistrustin' my judgment that landed you in a hospital. Captain John and Margaret will be over to pay their respects

as soon as the doctors will let 'em pass the hospital gangway. I just came from telling them about you."

But David's mind had harked back to his own ship, and his face was so troubled and despairing that Mr. Becket tugged at his red mustache and waited in a gloomy silence.

"I've lost my ship," said David at length. "Captain Bracewell and I are on the beach together."

"Why didn't I think to telephone the dock as soon as I guessed it in the newspaper?" mourned Mr. Becket, beating his head with his fists. "But Captain Thrasher or some of 'em aboard will read it."

"They won't know it's me," wailed David. "All I can do now is to report to the dock as soon as I can, but I am afraid it will do no good."

The boy's distress was so moving that Mr. Becket had to look out of the window to hide his own woe. Then he spun around and announced with a shout that brought nurses and orderlies hurrying from the near-by wards:

"I have it, my boy. Abel Becket's intellect is on the mend. Send old Thrasher a wire-

less, do you hear? Get the hospital folks to sign it."

With that Mr. Becket jerked a roll of bills from his waistcoat and demanded a telegraph blank with so commanding an air that an orderly rushed for the office. The sailor-man and David put their heads together and composed this message to the *Roanoke*, which was speeding hull down and under, far beyond Sandy Hook:

Cadet Downes hurt on shore leave. Unable report because senseless. Anxious to rejoin ship.

"No, that doesn't sound right," objected David. "He thinks I have no sense anyhow. I can just hear him saying that he isn't in the least surprised. Try it again, Mr. Becket."

"Time is up," put in the nurse. "And I ought to have cut it shorter, with your friend bellowing at you as if he were in a storm at sea."

Mr. Becket looked repentant, as he whispered to David:

"Sit tight and keep your nerve. I'll get the wireless off all shipshape. Good-by, and God bless you."

The patient soon fell asleep. It was late in the afternoon when he awoke, hungry and refreshed. The nurse informed him:

"A dear old man and a sweet mite of a girl called to ask after you, and I told them to come back in the morning and they might see you. Mr. Cochran had you put in this private room and left orders that you were to be made as comfortable as possible. So we will have to stretch the rules a bit, I suppose, and let your friends call out of visiting hours to-morrow."

David asked who the mysterious Mr. Cochran might be, but he could learn nothing from the nurse, except that he was the wealthy gentleman who had brought him to the hospital in his automobile. David tried to be patient overnight, and was mightily cheered by the arrival of a wireless message, which read:

S.S. Roanoke. At sea.

Have cadet repaired in first-class shape to join ship next voyage. He is a nuisance.

Thrasher, Master.

The news that he still belonged in the liner braced David like a strong tonic. What did a

cracked head-piece amount to now? Being called a nuisance only made him smile. It was Captain Thrasher's way of trying to cover every kindly deed he did. Next forenoon he was rereading this message for something like the tenth time when Captain Bracewell was shown into the room. Margaret followed rather timidly, as if she feared to find her hero in fragments. The skipper looked even older than when he had left the *Roanoke*, but the "little girl" looked more like a June rose than a white violet, so swiftly had her sparkling color returned. She had both her hands around one of David's as she cried:

"Are you always going to get banged up, you poor sailor boy? And we were to blame for it again, weren't we?"

"You had no business to run away from me," returned the beaming patient. "The worst of it was that I almost lost my own ship."

These were thoughtless words said in fun, but they stung Captain Bracewell with remembrance of his own misfortune, and he stood staring beyond David with troubled eye.

Margaret was quick to read his unhappiness, and brought him to himself with a fluttering caress. The derelict shipmaster smiled, and said to David:

"Glad to find you doing so well, boy. You just take it that you are one of our family while you are ashore. There is an extra room in our—in our—" He hesitated, and a bit of color came into his leathery cheek as he finished: "We can find a room for you close by us."

"He means that just now we can't afford to hire more than three rooms to live in," explained Margaret without embarrassment. "But it will be different when we get our ship."

They chatted for a few minutes longer and David promised to find a room as near them as he could, while he waited for the return of the *Roanoke*. It was easy to see that they wanted to take care of him, but, for his own part, he felt a kind of guardian care for the welfare of the two "Pilgrims," and he was very glad of the chance to be with them at a time when Captain Bracewell was so pitifully unlike his reliant self. After they had gone, David fell

to wondering anew about this unknown Mr. Cochran who had so lavishly befriended him. It was enough to make even a sound head ache, and when the nurse brought his dinner, David begged her:

"If you don't tell me something more about Mr. Cochran, I'll blow up."

"He telephoned about you this morning," she answered, "and wanted to call, but you had visitors enough. The doctors have told him who you are, of course, and he seemed very much interested. He said he would bring his son to see you this afternoon. No, not another word. What must you be when you are well and sound? I'd sooner take care of a young cyclone."

Some time later the motherly nurse came in to say, with an air of excitement that she could not hide:

"Mr. Cochran and his boy to see you. *It is the great Stanley P. Cochran.* I knew him from his pictures in the newspapers and magazines."

The portly gentleman with the bald brow, gold-rimmed glasses, and close-cropped gray

mustache who entered the room with quick step looked oddly familiar to David. Why, of course, he had seen his portrait and his name as the head of a great Trust, and a director in railroads, banks, and corporations by the dozen. He spoke with curt, clean-clipped emphasis, as if his minutes were dollars:

"Pretty fit for a lad that looked as dead as a mackerel when I picked him up. Sailors have no business ashore, but they are hard to kill. Lucky I was so late in getting back from my country place the other night. Wish I'd run over the scoundrels, but the police got two of them. This is my boy, Arthur."

The delicate-looking lad, who had been hanging back, shook hands with David and smiled with such an air of shy friendliness and admiration that David liked him on the spot. He looked to be a year or two younger than the strapping cadet, and lacked the hale and rugged aspect of which his illness had not robbed him. Mr. Cochran resumed, as if expecting no reply:

"I liked your looks and there was no sense in waiting for the confounded ambulance. I

told them to treat you right. If they haven't, I'll get after the hospital, doctors, nurses, and all. When I found out that you were a cadet from the *Roanoke*, my boy had to come along. He is crazy about ships and sailors. Reads all the sea stories he can lay his hands on. Well, I must be off. Arthur, you may stay, but not long, mind you."

Mr. Stanley P. Cochran clapped on his silk hat and vanished as if he had dropped through a trap-door. His son said to David, with his shy smile:

"He is the best father that ever was, but he never has time to stay anywhere. I wish you would tell me all about your scrape. It sounds terribly interesting. Will it make your head hurt?"

The cadet had forgotten all about that hard and damaged head of his, and he plunged into the heart of his adventure without bringing in Captain Bracewell and Margaret. Their fortunes were too personal and intimate to be lugged out for the diversion of strangers. Arthur Cochran followed the flight from the sailors' eating-house with the most breathless

attention, and when David wound up with his head against the iron post and a ship's fireman about to kick his brains out, his audience sighed:

"Is that all? Things *never* happen to me. I am not very strong, you know, and they sort of coddle me, and trot me around to health resorts like a set of china done up in cotton. It makes me tired. Tell me all about being a cadet."

David fairly ached to spin the yarn of the *Pilgrim* wreck, but the cruel nurse cut the visit short, and Arthur Cochran had to depart with the assurance that he would come back next day "to hear the rest of it."

He was true to his word and found David so much stronger that the unruly patient was sitting up in bed and loudly demanding his clothes. It was the patient's turn to ask questions this time, and he was eager to know all about the occupations of a millionaire's son. The heir of the Cochran fortune had to do most of the talking. David demanded to know all about his automobiles, his horses, and his yacht, his trips to Florida and California, his

private tutors, and his several homes among which he flitted to and fro like an uneasy bird. Before they realized how time had fled Mr. Cochran came to take Arthur home. The Trust magnate was in his usual hurry, and he volleyed these commands as if argument were out of the question:

"I have looked you up, Downes. The Black Star office speaks very well of you. Also the store in which you used to work. I sent a man out this morning. My boy has taken a great fancy to you. He seldom finds a boy he likes. I think it might do him good to have you around. I have told the people here that you are to be moved to my house to-night. You will stay there until you feel all right. If you wear well, and you are as capable as you look, I shall find something better for you to do than this dog's life at sea. Come along, Arthur. You shall see David this evening."

David's head was in a whirl. A gentleman who belonged in the "Arabian Nights" was bent upon kidnapping him. It seemed as rash to question the orders of this lordly parent as to disobey Captain Thrasher, but there

was a look of stubborn resolution in the sun-tanned jaw of the young sailor and he was not to be so easily driven. He wavered in silence for a minute or two while Mr. Stanley P. Cochran eyed him with rising impatience. Visions of an enchanted land of wealth and pleasure danced before David's eyes, but even more clearly he saw the appealing figures of Captain Bracewell and Margaret. They needed him and he had promised to go to them. He looked up and shook his head as he said with much feeling:

"I don't know what makes you so good to me, sir. I never heard anything like it. But I can't accept your invitation. I can never thank you enough, but I belong somewhere else."

"You have no kinfolk here. I found out all that," exclaimed Mr. Cochran with a very red face. "Why can't you do as I tell you? Of course you can. Not another word! Come along, Arthur."

"I mean it," cried David. "I promised to stay with friends I met on shipboard."

He wanted to tell him about these friends, but the manner of Mr. Cochran stifled explana-

tion. The magnate was not used to such astonishing rebellion, and it galled him the more because he felt that he was stooping to do an uncommonly good deed.

"I seldom urge any one to enter my home," said he. "Nor will I waste words with a boy I picked off the streets; no, not even to humor my own son's fancies. Yes, or no!"

"*No*, it is," answered David, "but you mustn't be angry about it. You don't understand it at all. Give me a chance to tell you why."

Arthur tried to put in an anxious plea, but his father brushed him aside with the gesture of a Napoleon. "I never spoil an act of charity, Arthur," said the captain of industry. "The lad shall stay in the hospital until he is able to shift for himself, and I will pay his bills. But nothing more! He is ungrateful and contrary. Come along, Arthur."

David's wrath had risen to match the mood of the hot-tempered Mr. Stanley P. Cochran.

"I will get out of here to-night," cried the cadet. "And I'll pay you back every cent it has cost you as soon as I can save it out of

my wages. Good-by, Arthur. I am just as grateful as I can be, don't forget that."

Arthur had little time to express his surprise and sorrow, for his domineering parent was towing him down the hall under full steam. David was left to puzzle his wits over his first acquaintance with a millionaire. Of one thing he was sure. He must leave the hospital and have done with Mr. Stanley P. Cochran's singular charity as soon as ever the doctor would let him. But when he tried to rise, his head was very dizzy and his legs were oddly weak. To make his way alone to Captain Bracewell's lodgings was a task beyond his strength to attempt. He must wait another day, and fretting at the thought of Mr. Cochran's hasty misjudgments, the cadet's night was restless and slightly fevered.

Although Arthur Cochran sent him a cheery message by telephone next morning, it hurt David to know that the boy had been forbidden to visit him again. He longed for the sight of a friendly face, and his joy was beyond words when the flaming thatch of Mr. Becket burst upon his sight and dispelled the gloom like the

sun breaking through a cloud. David at once began to tell the wonderful tale of Mr. Stanley P. Cochran before the seafarer could edge in a word. The listener chewed the ends of his mustache for a while, and then his chin dropped and his mouth stayed open in sheerest amazement. Before David had reached the climax, Mr. Becket broke in:

"*Mr. Stanley P. Cochran* asked you to bunk in his house, to be mess-mates with him and his only boy? Pro–dig–io–ou–s! I'd let any gang of roustabouts knock my head off, close behind the ears, for a gorgeous chance like that. You are the makin's of a first-class sailor, Davy, because you are so many kinds of a stark, starin' fool ashore."

"But I had to look after the 'Pilgrims,'" protested David.

"You aren't in shape to look after yourself, you poor idiot," cried Mr. Becket. "You ought to see yourself in the glass, with your head all tied in a sling. You look after anybody? Shucks! You turned down Mr. Stanley P. Cochran? Why, he would ha' made you for life. Oh, my! Oh, my!"

"But I couldn't feel right if I didn't stand by Captain John and Margaret, Mr. Becket. I'll never be happy till he gets another ship."

Mr. Becket buried his face in a pillow and appeared to be wrapped in hopeless dejection. When his florid countenance emerged from its total eclipse he groaned twice, heaved a sigh that fairly shook him, and glared at David with speechless reproach.

"What in the world has happened to you now?" peevishly quoth the patient. "You don't come into this. And I haven't done anything to be sorry for."

"I hadn't ought to tell you, Davy, and you sick in bed," confessed the dismal Mr. Becket. "It's rubbin' it in too hard. Mr. Stanley P. Cochran has just bought out the Columbia sugar refineries, hook, line, and sinker. I read it in the *Shipping Gazette* last week. And that included the whole fleet of square-rigged ships that fetches their cargoes from the Far East. He controls 'em all now, does Stanley P. Cochran."

"You mean that I might have helped to get a ship for Captain John?" David piteously appealed.

"Easy as robbin' a sailor," solemnly answered Mr. Becket. "That boy of his can have anything on earth, up to a herd of white elephants, for the simple askin'. And you could ha' had anything you wanted through the young hopeful. It was a direct act of Providence that you had to go and monkey with."

David was in the torments of regret. Yes, Arthur Cochran was just the kind of a boy to feel an affectionate interest in the fortunes of Captain John and Margaret, once he had a chance to know them. But the opportunity was past and dead. Mr. Becket looked a little less hopeless as he exclaimed:

"Is it too late to patch it up? Can't we charter a hack and overhaul Stanley P. and tell him the prodigal is ashamed of the error of his ways?"

"He is not that kind," said David. "He will never speak to me again. I jolted his pride and he is done with me for good. Oh, but I did try to do what was right. And I've done wrong to my best and dearest friends."

"I begin to think you were born to trouble as the sparks fly upward," was Mr. Becket's dreary comment.

CHAPTER V

MID FOG AND ICE

A YEAR had passed since David Downes lay grieving in the hospital over the great chance he had let slip to help mend the fortunes of Captain Bracewell and Margaret. The cadet no longer dreamed of giving up his life's work on the sea. He had sailed twelve voyages in the *Roanoke*, which every month ploughed her stately way across the Atlantic and return, through six thousand miles of hazards. Cadets had come and gone. Few of them who sought to make their careers in this way had the grit and patience to endure the machine-like routine in which advancement lay years and years ahead. But David had begun to understand the meaning of this slow process by which his mind was being taught to act with sure judgment, and he saw how very much there was to learn and suffer before a man could win the mastery of the sea.

Because he was strong, quick, and obedient, the navigating officers took a genuine interest in his welfare. They had begun to teach him the uses of their instruments and books. He knew the language of the fluttering signal flags by day and the sputtering Coston lights and winking lamps by night. The taffrail log and the Thompson sounding machine were no longer blind mysteries, and much of his leisure was spent in the chart room. The bos'n taught him what few tricks of old-fashioned seamanship were left to learn in a vessel whose spars were no more than cargo derricks. The cadet had begun to know the liner, the vast and intricate organization, whose ever-throbbing life extended through eight stories that were like so many hotels, machine shops, and factories. And he realized what it must mean to be that calm and ever-ready man in the captain's cabin, whose mind was in touch with every one of these myriad activities by night and day.

Meanwhile David had become more and more fond of and intimate with his sea waifs of the *Pilgrim*. Every time the *Roanoke* wove her way back to New York, like a giant shuttle

plying over a vast blue carpet, the cadet was with Margaret and her grandfather as often as he was allowed ashore. Captain Bracewell had not found the ship for which he yearned, but his former owners had given him a berth as stevedore on their wharf, and in faithful drudgery he earned a living and a home for Margaret.

He had never become his old self again. He was like one of the splendid square-rigged ships which had been degraded to spend its last days as a coal barge. But he had learned to keep his sorrows and regrets to himself, and, gray-haired hero that he was, lived and toiled for the "little girl," who was the one anchor to hold him from drifting on the lee shore of a broken and useless old age.

David Downes had grown very close to the ship-master's heart. His young strength and his hope and pride in his calling were like a fresh sea-breeze. Nor did anything have quite as much power to kindle Captain Bracewell's emotions as David's confidence that somehow and some day the message would come that a master was needed on the quarter-deck of some

fine deep-water sailing ship. Even the bos'n of the *Roanoke*, to whom David had told his dreams, took a lively interest in the matter and went so far as to declare:

"The very first Christmas what I makes my fortunes I vill put a four-masted Yankee ship in your stockings, boy, mit stores and crew ready for sea, and this granddaddy of yours walkin' up and down the poop, so?"

When the *Roanoke* was ordered into dry-dock at Southampton, at the end of David's first year in her, she missed a voyage and the cadet had to be content with letters from his friends in New York. In the first packet of mail was a surprising lot of news from Margaret, which read as follows:

DEAR BROTHER DAVY:

It is awful lonesome without you for seven whole weeks. Grandfather misses you more than he thinks he lets me see, and he is almost as fidgety as when we landed from the dear old *Pilgrim*. Mr. Becket is in port and is the cheerfulest of us all though he ought to be the saddest. After being chief officer in that coastwise steamer for three years, he was silly enough to play a joke on his skipper in Charles-

ton last week. And, of course, the old man found it out. Mr. Becket is a perfect dear, but he hasn't much sense when he gets one of his fits of the do-funnies. The captain was in a barber shop ashore, getting his whiskers cut off for the summer season. And Mr. Becket paid two hackmen to walk in as if they just happened there, and begin to talk to each other about the fire on the wharves. Of course, the captain pricked up his ears, and then one of the men said:

"They tell me it blazed up just like an explosion and is right smack alongside the *Chesapeake*."

That was Mr. Becket's steamer, you know. One side of the captain's whiskers was off and the other wasn't, and he made a jump from the chair, took one of the hackmen by the neck, shoved him through the door, and threw him up on the box of his carriage. Then the captain hopped inside and told the man to drive to the wharf like fury. Of course, the hackman had not expected to be caught this way, but he had to go or else the captain would have broken his neck for him, at least that is what he said he would do.

And when they got to the wharf the captain flew out of the cab and down to his ship. The deck was full of passengers and they laughed till they cried, for the captain must have been a *sight* with only half his whiskers on. Mr.

Becket says they were a fathom long, but he is a terrible exaggerator, as you know. Then the captain ran back after the hackman and caught him and scared him so that he told on Mr. Becket. Wasn't it a shame? Anyhow, he was a horrid captain to his officers and Mr. Becket says he is going to wait for the ship you expect to build for grandfather and me. Write soon and come home as quick as you can to

Your Most Affectionate Little Sister,

MARGARET.

David tore open an envelope that bore the marks of Mr. Becket's ponderous fist, hoping for more light on this family tragedy. The luckless mate had no more to say, however, than this:

DEAR DAVY:

Do you need a strong and willing seaman in your gilt-edged packet? The coasting trade don't agree with my delicate health. I have left the *Chesapeake* owing to one of them cruel misunderstandings that makes a sailor's life as uncertain as the lilies of the field which are skylarkin' to-day and are cut down and perisheth to-morrow. It is too painful to bother your tender young feelings with. Hold on, I don't think I want to ship with you. Your

skipper wears a fine crop of tan whiskers. They would be sure to fill me with sad and tormentin' memories. All's well, and they can't keep a good man down. Your shipmate,

ABEL Y. BECKET.

David read the letter to the bos'n, expecting sympathy, but that hard-hearted mariner laughed boisterously, and said:

"He got vat was comin' to him, the red-headed old sundowner. I know that Becket man. I wish he shipped as a seaman mit me. I make him yump mit a rope's end. He, ho, ho!—the old man mit his whiskers carried away on the port side. I give a month's wages to see him."

David grew a little hot at such callous treatment of a friend in distress, but could not help smiling as the bos'n trudged off about his work, wagging his head and muttering:

"Mit his whiskers under jury-rig. The red-headed old sundowner! He *is* a rascal, is that Becket man!"

"I am going to find out whether this line needs any more junior officers," sighed David to himself. "It seems as if all my family

is hoodooed about keeping their berths afloat. I wish I was big enough to spank Mr. Abel Y. Becket."

A few days after this the *Roanoke* was ready for sea and all hands resumed their routine duties. The liner slid out into Southampton Water, and swung up Channel toward the North Sea and Antwerp to pick up her passengers and cargo for the homeward voyage. Clean and tuned up after her overhauling, the crack ship of the Black Star Line was fit for a record run across the Atlantic.

Nor had Captain Thrasher ever felt more pride and confidence in the power, speed, and seaworthiness of the *Roanoke* than when he dropped the Dutch pilot off Flushing a few days later and signalled "full speed ahead," with Sandy Hook a week away and waiting wives and sweethearts "hauling on the tow-line." Nor were any of the passengers who flocked along the rail in cheerful groups more eager to get home to their own than the stalwart cadet who tramped the boat deck and watched the Channel shipping sweep past like a panorama. An older cadet, with whom David

had formed a fast sea friendship, listened with kindly interest to his hopes and anxiety that all was well with Captain John and Margaret. In David's thoughts the "little girl" was still the helpless child of the *Pilgrim*, who needed the constant and protecting care of a big brother. Margaret was fourteen now, on the threshold of her fair girlhood, but in her devotion to David there was no sentiment, save that of a sister's trusting and adoring affection.

Captain Thrasher had come to know these friends of David's through their occasional visits on board, when the ship was in port, and his manner toward them was always most cordial. Now and then he unbent a trifle at sea and asked David if Captain Bracewell had found another ship. David was not frightened, therefore, when the master of the liner beckoned him, while passing down from the bridge to supper. The cadet followed the bulky, resolute figure in blue into the sacred precincts of the captain's quarters, and stood silent, cap in hand. In his eyes, Captain Stephen Thrasher was the most enviable man alive, far outshining presidents and kings.

Perhaps because he had been longer away from his home than usual and was thinking of his own lads in school, the masterful captain of the liner addressed David almost as if he were a friend:

"Are you getting on all right, my boy? Do you peg away at your books off watch?"

"Yes, sir. The chief officer thinks I have a turn for navigation. That is, sir, he said that whatever once got inside my thick head was pretty sure to stick there."

Captain Thrasher chuckled, and looked the boy over from head to foot before he resumed:

"How is that stranded friend of yours, Captain Bracewell and his pretty granddaughter?"

"They are well, sir, but Mr. Becket has lost his—his—" David bit his tongue. He had almost said too much. The captain did not know Mr. Becket from a marline-spike, and his affairs must not be dragged in unless asked for. But Captain Thrasher showed no interest in whatever it was that Mr. Becket had lost, and abruptly ended the interview with:

"You will be put on the ship's papers as an able seaman next voyage. But you will berth

with the cadets, understand? Don't thank me. You have earned promotion. That's all. You are a nuisance. Get out."

David saluted, and his radiant face expressed his thanks which the captain had forbidden him to put in words. Once on deck, the new-fledged able seaman danced a shuffle and cracked his heels together. His wages would be doubled, and he had left one round of the long ladder behind him. For the next three days he went about his duties in a kind of blissful trance, but he was none the less determined to earn another step in promotion hour by hour, one task at a time, done as well and faithfully as he knew how.

The voyage which had begun so brightly was fated to test the mettle, not only of David Downes, but of every man of the ship's company. The fog, which shut down on the third day like a gray curtain, made navigation a perilous game of hide and seek. Captain Thrasher took his post on the bridge, to stay there until the fog should clear. Far down in the clanging engine rooms the chief engineer and his army of toilers were alert to respond to

signals on the instant. The safety of thousands of lives and millions of property was in their keeping also. They were like bold and resourceful pygmies among the mighty monsters of clanging steel which they were ready to tame and check at the call from above.

Through a long night the *Roanoke* groped her way over a shrouded sea on which the fog hung so thick that the ghostly figures on the bridge could not see the bow of their own ship. It was no better when daylight wiped the blackness from the fog. The steamer was wrapped in a blind world in which there was no sound except the bellowing of the automatic whistle.

David had seen Captain Thrasher pick his sure way through days and nights of such weather as this, but now the master appeared to be more cautious and absorbed in his great responsibility than ever before. Some unusual strain and uneasiness were picking at his nerves, and his officers were aware of it, but they kept their thoughts to themselves. Nor would David have guessed the truth so soon had not Captain Thrasher tossed away a wireless message slip

instead of tearing it up. David caught it as it fluttered past the wheel-house and began to read without thinking it to be more than a greeting from some passing vessel. Beneath the figures of latitude and longitude was written:

S.S. *Hanoverian.*

Dense fog clearing. Many large icebergs in sight just to the northward of us. Most unusual southerly ice drift directly in west-bound track. If you are in fog advise great caution. Please repeat warning to any other vessels behind you.

GREENFELT, *Master.*

David let the bit of paper blow overside and slipped into the chart room to calculate the position of the *Hanoverian.* The chart showed him that she was a hundred and fifty miles west and considerably to the southward of the *Roanoke* when the message was sent. When David returned to the deck an officer was already making reports of the temperature of the water, and Captain Thrasher was standing with head cocked and a hand at his ear, listening, on the chance that the clamor of the fog-whistle might fling back a telltale echo from some hidden mountain of ice that lay in ambush.

Before long David was ordered to stand by the wireless operator's room and fetch to the bridge any messages that might leap from his rattling, sparking instruments. But the *Roanoke* was left to work out her fate alone. Even the *Hanoverian*, having picked up her speed with clearing weather, had hurried beyond calling distance of the slow-creeping Black Star liner.

The second night of the fog stole softly around the ship. As the chill and dripping air changed from pearly gray to starless gloom, the hoarse and frequent whistle seemed to be appealing for guidance on this sightless sea. Bridge, deck, and engine room were unceasingly vigilant. Their first warning of deadly peril came when a blast from the whistle was hurled back in a volley of echoes from somewhere dead ahead. Captain Thrasher leaped to the engine-room indicator and signalled full speed astern, with both screws.

The *Roanoke* shook herself as if her rivets were pulling out, as the engines strove to hold her back, but the momentum of the vast bulk could not be checked on the instant. Then there came a far more violent shock, a grinding

roar, and the sound of rending steel and timber. Every man on deck was pitched off his feet. The stricken steamer listed heavily to port and then slowly righted, as the masses of ice dislodged from the berg by the collision slid off her fore deck.

What Captain Thrasher most dreaded had come to pass. In spite of his utmost care his ship had crashed into the ice that lay hidden in the fog and night. But every man of his crew knew that if his ship should go down, he was ready to go down with her. He stood on his bridge without sign of alarm or excitement, shouting swift, clean-cut orders. Before the steamer had ceased to grind against the pale and ghastly ice that towered above her, the water-tight doors in the scores of bulkheads were being closed by men who knew their stations in such a time as this.

Stewards were hastening among the cabin passengers to quiet their panic. Down in the steerage quarters hundreds of hysterical immigrants were running to and fro with prayers and screams, but a squad of hard-fisted seamen soon herded them like sheep and threatened death to

any who should try to force a way to the boat deck. The chief officer and the carpenters were forward with lanterns, and other men were in the holds seeking to find how much damage had been done.

The order came from the bridge for the boat crews to stand by, ready to abandon ship if need be. David took his station as he had been taught to do in the boat drill of voyage after voyage. It was very hard to wait in the darkness, but, far more than the cadet knew, his year of training under the relentless rule of the captain's discipline had been fitting him for the test.

The decks had begun to slope downward toward the bow. The forward compartments were filling, and the fate of the *Roanoke* hung on the strength of the collision bulkhead just aft of the wound the ice had made. David heard the chief officer sing out to the bridge:

"She's flooded to the first bulkhead, sir, but I think she will stay afloat. Will you come and see for yourself? The whole bow of her is stove in below the water line."

The *Roanoke* was slowly moving astern to try to go clear of the iceberg against which the long swells could be heard breaking as on a rock-bound beach. It seemed an eternity to David before Captain Thrasher returned to the bridge and shouted to an officer:

"Tell the people below we are in no danger before daylight. Better put it stronger than that. Tell them we will make port."

Up in the darkness they listened to the frantic cheers that rose from cabins and steerage, but the passengers had not heard the captain's grim comment to himself:

"If it comes on to blow, there may be another story to tell."

When daylight came the liner made an astonishing sea picture. The fog had lifted a little and the sombre sea was visible for a few lengths away. The steamer's bow was gone. In its place was a jagged cavern of twisted, crumpled steel, into which the waves washed and broke with the sound of distant thunder. The captain dared risk no more pressure against his straining bulkhead which kept the vessel afloat, and the *Roanoke* lay motionless, while

all hands that could be mustered for the work were bracing the inside of the bulkhead with timbers and piles of heavy cargo. There could be no driving the ship ahead against the tremendous weight of the sea until this task was done.

The barometer had risen overnight and the liner's chances were slightly more hopeful. Her wireless instrument was chattering to the world beyond the sky line that she was in sore straits, but if any steamers passed within unseen hailing distance they were not equipped to talk through the air. The *Roanoke* was left to make the best of her plight.

David Downes had little thought for the fears of the passengers. His confidence in Captain Thrasher was supreme, and he knew that if it should come to the worst, the boats would be got away with orderly promptness. As for the crew, David hoped there might be room for him, and there was a lump in his throat and his breath seemed choked when he thought of being left to struggle and drown, but he felt himself to be a full-fledged American seaman, and he was proud of it. Whatever fate

might befall Captain Thrasher was good enough for him.

David was musing in this fashion as he hastened with urgent orders between the forehold and the bridge. On one of these trips he found the captain and the senior second officer poring over one of the yellow sheets on which the wireless messages were written.

"Some vessel is within helping distance," thought David, with a thrill of joy, and lingered, hoping to hear the good news.

Presently the captain went to his room, and the officer, taking pity on the youngster's open curiosity, confided:

"Here *is* a pretty kettle of fish. Those people are asking us to come to *their* assistance. That's the way it goes. Disasters always run in twos and threes. We can't make head or tail of the message except '*Help*' and '*No hope of gaining control.*' It sounds like fire, to me."

CHAPTER VI

THE MISSING BOAT

THERE was nothing to be done except to wait for another wireless call for help from the unseen vessel in distress. The first message included some figures which seemed like a frantic attempt to give the latitude and longitude of the stranger, but they were as puzzling as the rest of it.

"That wireless operator must be rattled, whoever he is," said one of the liner's officers. "Maybe his coat-tails are on fire."

Beckoning David to follow him to the chart room he added, with a gesture of dismay:

"Here *we* are, and I'm blessed if *his* figures don't put him somewhere in the middle of Canada, high and dry on a mountain range. As if we didn't have troubles enough!"

Captain Thrasher was irritable for the first time in this ill-fated voyage of the *Roanoke*, as he exclaimed from the bridge:

"I can't go in search of the confounded lunatic even if he is afire. What right has he to ask help of me when my bows are caved in like an old hat, with no chance at all of getting under way before night, and my ship half full of water? I'm trying to find help myself."

It was perhaps a half hour later when another message came winging its way through space. Captain Thrasher read it aloud, with frowning earnestness:

Fire spreading aft. Must abandon ship before long. Lives in danger. Help! Help!

The figures of latitude and longitude were repeated at the end of the message, and the previous mistakes corrected. The chart showed that the burning vessel lay about forty miles to the south-east of the helpless *Roanoke.*

"Why doesn't he say who and what he is?" growled Captain Thrasher. "If he is a big passenger steamer he *is* in a bad fix and no mistake. Tell the operator to ask him more about it, quick. And tell him we are in no

shape to go after him. My own people have to come first."

Captain Thrasher was more anxious than surprised. He had long since learned that nothing was too improbable to happen at sea, and he took it almost as a matter of course that collision and fire should occur fifty miles apart in the same twenty-four hours. It went sorely against his training to leave these other victims of disaster to shift for themselves, and he walked the bridge with restless tread until a third message was brought to him. It read:

Yacht "Restless." New York for Cherbourg. Owner on board. This may be last message. No hope of saving vessel. For God's sake pick us up.

"I have seen that steamer somewhere in port," said Captain Thrasher. "She must carry a crew of forty or fifty men. Well, I can't pick 'em up if the gilt-edged owner sends me a million dollars by wireless. Give them our position again and tell them we will keep a sharp lookout for their boats till nightfall and maybe longer."

As if in answer to the captain's words a final call came from the *Restless:*

Owner give you million dollars to come at once. Good-by. I'm off.

"He's a cheerful sport, that wireless gentleman," observed Captain Thrasher. "But I wonder if he got our position. I'm afraid not. I pray the good Lord their boats got away in time."

While the liner was by no means out of danger, the situation of the *Restless* people fairly tore at the captain's heartstrings. He was not a man to confess himself beaten in any crisis without trying to find a way out. He pored over the charts, studied the weather signs, tugged at his beard, and muttered savagely to himself. But he did not decide to act until the fog had vanished before a pleasant breeze in the early afternoon. The sun came out and the sea danced blue to the far horizon.

Then the captain delivered his orders with stern directness. Calling the third officer, he said:

"Mr. Briggs, you will take the number three boat and stand about fifteen miles to

the sou'-east. If the *Restless* boats are heading for us, you should be able to pick them up before nightfall and show them the way. Otherwise they may miss us. I shall expect you aboard by nine o'clock, at the latest. Watch for our rockets."

Mr. Briggs saluted, and mustered his crew. David Downes belonged in the number three boat, and Mr. Briggs grinned as the lad hurried up. He had not forgotten the trip to the wreck of the *Pilgrim*. As the boat was lowered, Captain Thrasher gazed grimly overside, realizing that he might need all his men and boats before night. But he had staked his judgment on being able to keep the liner afloat, and he was ready to face results without flinching.

The breeze dimpled the lazy swells and sail was hoisted in the boat. The men lounged on the thwarts while the stout craft bore away to the southward, and David fell to thinking of that other rescue during his first voyage. This was like a summer pleasure cruise with no danger in sight. Mr. Briggs at the tiller took a different view, which was colored by his arduous years at sea.

"There's nothing as bad as fire," said he, as if talking to himself. "A crew thinks it can master it until it is too late to get away in any kind of shape. I was in a bark that burned and my boat was adrift a week, without food or water to speak of. We never thought of quitting ship till the decks blew up and we had to go overboard, head first."

"This wireless is like talkin' to the bloomin' ghosts of dead men," muttered an English seaman. "You cawn't make me believe there's any burnin' vessel out 'ere till I sees it. We might as well go chasin' a bad dream, that's wot it is."

The crew became silent, while the boat hissed through the long seas, and the black hull of the *Roanoke* dropped lower and lower behind them. Wireless telegraphy was too recent an aid to sea-faring to seem real to these simple sailors; this was the first time its workings had touched their lives, and they were not ready to take the burning yacht on faith unseen.

After three hours had slid past Mr. Briggs began to sweep the sea with his glasses, stand-

ing in the stern-sheets, with the tiller between his knees. He had run down his fifteen miles of southing, but the blue horizon line was without a speck to mar it.

He decided to risk stretching his orders a bit by keeping on his course for another hour or so. The breeze still held and he could stand back for the *Roanoke* with free sheets and oars out. He knew that if the boats of the *Restless* should drift beyond the steamer lanes or trans-Atlantic routes, days and even weeks might pass without their being sighted or picked up.

The perplexed officer was on the point of giving up the search when his keen eye caught sight of a faint smudge between sea and sky. It looked like a tiny fragment of cloud, but it might be smoke. He ordered his men to their oars, and the boat increased her speed.

"If it is a steamer's smoke she may have rescued them," said he; "if not, it may be the yacht, still afloat."

The ashen-colored smudge of smoke grew in size as they steered toward it until it became a trailing banner.

"No funnels could make all that mess," shouted Mr. Briggs, as he flourished his glasses. "That is the bonfire, and it must be pretty near the end of it. I'm surprised that she's stayed afloat this long."

He was a good prophet, for while he stared, the smoke suddenly spread skyward like a huge fan, hung for a moment, and then vanished, except for tattered fringes of vapor that drifted slowly to leeward.

"That's the end of her," cried Mr. Briggs. "She blew up and sank with one big puff. Her boats ought to be sighted before long."

There was no more thought of returning to the *Roanoke* empty-handed. The men rowed like mad, as if they were matched in a race for life, not realizing that the smoke had been sighted a good ten miles away. It was near sunset when Mr. Briggs had a glimpse of a white dot far ahead which he took to be a boat. As they pulled nearer, he saw that it was a life-raft covered with men who were paddling with oars and bits of plank. It was easy work to get alongside and pass them a line in such calm weather as this.

The grimy, blistered men who cheered as the boat prepared to take them aboard had no belongings to hamper the transfer. Some of them were half naked and it was plain to read that they had left their vessel in the most desperate haste, after fighting fire to the last moment. First over the gunwale was a very stout derelict in dripping blue trousers, who puffed like a porpoise as he sputtered:

"Can't swim a stroke, but floated like a cork. How's that? Me the owner? Not on your life. I'm the wireless juggler that sent you the holler for help. No more life on the ocean wave for Willie. I've been eating smoke and spitting cinders since yesterday."

While this undismayed survivor babbled on as if his tongue were hung in the middle, David was trying to drag from the raft a ragged man who lay limp and face downward. The task was too heavy for his strength, and with great difficulty two pairs of arms heaved and lifted until they rolled their burden inboard. Without pausing to look him over, David lent a hand elsewhere until the *Restless* party, twenty strong, was stowed aboard and the life-raft cast adrift.

It was easy work to get alongside and pass them a line.

Most of them were able to sit up and talk. The man who seemed to be worst off was the first one who had been helped aboard by David. The late chief officer of the yacht made his way toward this huddled and senseless figure and called to Mr. Briggs:

"Here's the owner, all in a heap. Looks like his heart has gone back on him, for he wasn't in the water more than five minutes."

As he lay propped against a thwart the owner's back was toward David at his oar. The cadet had no idea that he had ever clapped eyes on him before, and he listened with eager interest to the answers which the other men gave to Mr. Briggs's questions.

"The rest of us are in two boats, somewhere to the eastward, sir," they explained. "No, there was nobody left on board. The way it was, the captain and them others was fightin' the fire aft, and they got cut off from us who was driven clear up into the bows of her before we got through. She was just a solid blaze amidships, understand, and there was no getting back to each other. The other crowd stood it as long as they could, and ther

when it was take to the water or be frizzled where they stood, they pitched the boats over and got away. The fog hadn't begun to lift then. They were going to lay by and wait for us, but the blazin' heat below set her engines goin' in a kind of dying flurry and she ran a while before she stopped for good. We couldn't get below to stop her, and we couldn't go overboard for fear of bein' chewed up by the screw, and so there we stuck up forward till we could get the raft over. The two boats lost us in the fog, and you know the rest of it."

"The owner's boy was with the captain's crowd aft. Mr. Cochran put him in the skipper's charge when things looked desperate," explained the mate of the *Restless*. "When Mr. Cochran got separated from the lad and couldn't get aft to him, and saw him drift out of sight in the fog, he just threw up his hands and went clean off his head."

"Mr. Cochran! The owner's boy!" gasped David Downes. He leaned over and raised the pallid face of the owner of the *Restless*. Yes, although sadly changed, it was the once pompous and lordly man of millions who had

rescued, befriended, and then forsaken him in New York. And Arthur, the slim, delicate lad with the shy, confiding smile who had been so fond of the cadet—poor lad, he was adrift in an open boat beyond help from the *Roanoke's* boat. David forgot all the resentment he had cherished against the father, as he tried to heave him into a more comfortable position and anxiously searched his face for signs of life.

"He was a fine boy. Heart as big as a cork fender," said a *Restless* seaman. "God bring him safe to port, say I. Will we be after goin' in search of the boats, do you know?"

Mr. Briggs shook his head reluctantly. He must return to the *Roanoke* with all haste.

"We have done all we can," he answered slowly. "Our own ship needs us, and we are lucky to have done this much. It is awful tough on Mr. Cochran, I know, to leave his boy adrift, but we wouldn't have one chance in a million of finding them to-night."

These words seemed to awaken the dulled understanding of the father. He roused from his stupor and hoarsely quavered:

"Where is Arthur? Leave the boy adrift? What did I hear? What do you mean? There's some mistake. Look for him till you find him, I tell you. Oh, my boy, my boy, I never meant to forsake you."

David patted him on the shoulder and wiped the clammy face with the sleeve of his jersey. The great man was no more than a sodden lump of sorrowing humanity, crushed and useless, and David wished that he might somehow comfort him. Mr. Cochran had fallen back speechless and exhausted, and he did not come to himself again until the boat was well on her way toward the *Roanoke*. His wits were clearing, and with a trace of his old domineering manner he addressed Mr. Briggs:

"Keep up the search until you find him, my man. Ten thousand dollars for you and your men if you give me back my boy."

"We have been headed the other way for an hour," replied the third officer, with pity in his voice. "I am obeying my orders. That is all I can do."

"What? You have abandoned the yacht's boats?" Mr. Cochran almost screamed.

"Turn about with you, instantly. Don't you understand? I'll make every man of you rich for life."

He tried to struggle to his feet, but muscular hands gripped his heaving shoulders and he fell back lamenting:

"The hardship will kill him. What shall I say to his mother? Oh, what shall I tell her?"

It was the first time that David had heard Arthur's mother mentioned. He felt a deeper pang at the thought of her. But, alas, Mr. Stanley P. Cochran had to learn in this cruel hour that his millions could not buy a way through all difficulties. He fell to abusing the chief engineer of the *Restless*, who crouched in front of him.

"You let the yacht run away from them," he stormed. "Why didn't you stop your engines, you worthless, cowardly scoundrel?"

The engineer raised a pair of hands which were raw with burns, and felt of his blistered face. With unexpected patience he responded:

"I was the last man to come on deck. I cooked the hide off me to leave things right below. Heaven only knows what started her

up again. There was no getting down there again, you know that."

The owner once more fell to mourning.

"How can I show my face anywhere? I am saved and Arthur is lost. Why couldn't it have been the other way?"

"He was takin' the lad abroad for a vacation trip," explained a harsh voice in David's ear. "The sea voyage was for the lad's health, and the old man was coaxed into pryin' himself loose from his business for once. *We're* sorry it *wasn't* the swelled-up money-grubbin' swine that went adrift instead of his boy."

Other men of the *Restless* grunted approval of their comrade's verdict. But David had glimpsed a new side of Mr. Cochran's nature. He would indeed have sacrificed himself to save his son. The truth of it was in his trembling voice, in the very pose of his drooping shoulders. It was hard to believe that this was the father who had fairly dragged his son away from David in the room of the hospital in New York. As Mr. Cochran began to pull himself out of his collapse, he managed to twist around so that he was looking up into David's

face, which was in the light thrown by a boat-lantern. For several minutes the father stared at the tanned young seaman, as if bewildered and groping in his memory. Then he burst out with a kind of surprised snarl:

"It's the boy that had no manners or decency, the young cub that made me sick of him. What are you doing here, alive and well, with my son lost and dying out yonder, lost at sea? How can such things be?"

"I helped pick you up at any rate," faltered David, taken all aback. "And I'd gladly stay out here a week to help you find Arthur."

"*You* safe and well!" repeated Mr. Cochran, "and my Arthur abandoned. It's all a nightmare. It must be that."

His anger veered against Mr. Briggs, and he bombarded him with threats, bribes, and pleadings, until the rockets from the *Roanoke* soared into the clear night and the yacht's people shouted at the welcome sight. Then Mr. Cochran clutched at a new hope. He declared that he would buy the ship if only he might persuade the captain to search for the lost boat until he found it.

The liner was almost ready to limp on her way when the boat rejoined her. Repairs had been made with better success than Captain Thrasher hoped for. His anxious scrutiny convinced him that, with fair weather, his shattered bow could withstand the sea, and he had determined to proceed very slowly on his course toward New York. He had been in wireless communication with two steamers, one of which stood by until dusk, when the liner sent word that she would not transfer her people. The captain had also told them to look out for the boats from the burning yacht. This news was carried to Mr. Cochran, who feebly tottered forward in breathless haste to find the commander. David saw the bedraggled magnate swaying against the door of the captain's room as he begged:

"But I'll reimburse the company. I don't care what it costs. What if it does cost you your position? I'll pay you double the salary to do nothing for the rest of your life. It's my only boy, Captain. Your ship won't run any risk."

The voice of Captain Thrasher rose in response:

"I have said my last word. Do you think I'll stake the lives of two thousand people against one or twenty? Go below and get some rest. I can't talk to you to-night."

When David went aft in the late evening with the fourth officer to set the log over the stern, the liner was vibrating to the steady thrust of her engines, and her broad wake foamed white in the starlit darkness. Against the rail beside them leaned a portly man, his face hidden in the shadows. He was gazing toward the southward over the ocean which rolled away in mystery, vast and obscure.

David answered, "Ay, ay, sir," in reply to an order, and the man at the rail turned at sound of the lad's voice. As the mate raised his lantern to read the log-dial, Mr. Cochran exclaimed:

"It's you again, is it? I am sorry I spoke to you as I did to-day. I am grateful for your part in saving me and my men, and I was out of my head, I guess."

This strangely softened mood was new to David, but his sympathetic heart was quick to meet it, and to let bygones be bygones.

"I wish I could help you, sir," he returned. "But I am just chockfull of hope that we will hear from Arthur. He may be picked up before we are landed. We'll have him back again. You can bet your life on that."

The father gazed again across the darkened sea. He was leaving his only son behind him, and all the pride of wealth and self and power had been stripped from him. All he could think of to say as he shook hands with David was:

"Arthur was very fond of you, and I am sorry that I came between you two."

CHAPTER VII

THE BONDS OF SYMPATHY

THE Black Star Line wharf in North River was crowded with cheering men, women, and children. Their fluttering handkerchiefs looked like a sudden flurry of snow. The roar of steam whistles from a hundred harbor craft rose above the din on the wharf. Past the Battery was creeping a sea-stained liner, her great steel prow so crushed and battered that the thousands who watched her wondered how she could have been kept afloat. The news of her coming had been sent by wireless, and a fleet of the company's tugs had hurried to sea to meet her.

The kinfolk and friends of those on board had been kept in a state of panicky alarm, day after day, by the flaring newspaper head-lines which sent the *Roanoke* to the bottom and raised her again, in hourly "extras."

The band on the promenade deck was lustily playing "home again, home again, from a foreign shore," as the tugs poked their noses against the black side of the ocean cripple and began to nudge her into her berth. David Downes was looking for friends on the wharf, but he scanned the masses of upturned faces in vain, until the bos'n prodded him in the ribs, and said:

"Cast your eye on the end of the pier, boy. I see a red spot. It vas Becket or else there is a fire just broke out. Nobody has as red-headed a head as that crazy feller."

Sure enough, there was Mr. Becket, waving his arms like a wild man; beside him was the tall figure of Captain Bracewell; and between them a slip of a girl was dancing up and down in her efforts to get a clear view of the ship. David's eyes filled as he swung his cap above his head. There were his "dearest folks," as he called them, and he was as rich in welcomes as any of the passengers who were making so much joyful noise along the decks below. Bless them, what news had they? Was Mr. Becket still stranded, and was there any hope

of a ship for Captain John? The long voyage of disaster and adventure seemed like a dream. David Downes, able seaman, was come back to his own.

The gangways were lowered, and the passengers streamed ashore, telling their stories at the top of their voices, as they flew into the arms of their friends. David went below to find Mr. Cochran, who had found no joy in this homecoming and deliverance from the sea. He was hanging back to let the crowd pass ashore, and he looked very forlorn and lonely. Gentlemen high in the world of finance, and managers of his great interests had flocked aboard to greet him and to offer their aid and sympathy. But he had begged to be left alone, and, oddly enough, his heavy face lighted for the first time when David found him. They had seen little of each other since the *Roanoke* resumed her voyage. David had been doing a double trick of duty, and the millionaire was so racked in body and mind that he was seldom on deck. But in their few meetings Mr. Cochran had been almost pathetically friendly of manner, as if he were trying to make amends because of

his boy's fondness for the sailor lad. Now when the parting hour came Mr. Cochran seemed genuinely affected. His wonted abruptness of speech had been assumed again, and he carried himself with an air of frowning dignity, but he took one of David's hard hands between both his own as he said:

"He talked a great deal about you, and you must come and see me and talk to me about him. You won't refuse this time, will you? His—his mother will be delighted to see you."

David made haste to reply:

"Of course I will and thank you, sir. And you will send me any news of Arthur as quick as you can, please promise me that."

Mr. Cochran nodded, and David hesitated, as if he had something else on his mind. He was thinking that it might do Mr. Cochran good to know his "dearest folks" in such a time as this, but he dared stay away no longer from the crowded gangway, so he said good-by to the man whose path had so strangely crossed his own again.

Soon there appeared on the landing stage the brilliant beacon of hair which topped the

robust Mr. Becket as he skilfully piloted Margaret through the confusion. It was hard work for David to keep from rushing to meet them half-way, but he remembered the discipline expected of an able seaman. Mr. Becket was first to reach him, and he proceeded to thump David's chest and pound his back with the exhortation:

"All sound and fit for duty? The collision didn't stave you in anywheres?"

Margaret was able to greet her "big brother" only by shoving Mr. Becket out of the way with all her might.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself, abusing David as if you weren't a bit glad to see him," she cried. "Oh, but we are glad to see you, and are you all right, and are you coming home to supper with us? I don't believe I've slept a wink this week, have I, grandfather?"

Captain John was meekly waiting for a chance to make his presence known. He clapped his hands on David's shoulders and his honest eyes glowed with pride and affection as he exclaimed:

"We feel quite set up that you belong to us, Davy. Here you go picking up more mariners in distress. We've heard all about it."

"We can talk it all over to-night," said David, shaking hands all round again. "I am on watch now and I mustn't neglect my duty even for you."

His boyish manner was so very serious that Mr. Becket went off into a series of explosive chuckles, from which he was diverted by the appearance of the bos'n who declared in the most threatening voice:

"The red-headed loafer again? I vill protect my whiskers mit my life. Get ashore mit you, you terrible Becket man, or I vill vash you down mit the fire-hose."

Mr. Becket was not in the least alarmed, and after a harmless exchange of blood-thirsty threats, he followed Captain John and Margaret down the gangway.

Later in the day the chief officer told David that as soon as her cargo was discharged, the *Roanoke* would go to Philadelphia for temporary repairs, which might take a month or more. The captain had left word that David

could have a week's shore leave and then rejoin the ship at Philadelphia. The news sounded too good to be true, and as soon as he was relieved from duty, David fairly ran ashore with a canvas bag of clothes under his arm. He made all speed to the tiny flat in which Margaret was keeping house for Captain John. Mr. Becket had been invited for supper, and he was boiling with eagerness to ask David a question which had been disturbing him all day long.

"Did you say anything to Mr. Stanley P. Cochran about vessels? You know what I mean. I didn't say a word to Captain John, for I don't want to get him stirred up with false alarms."

They had met in the outer hall, and Mr. Becket softly closed the door behind him, for his stage-whispers carried far.

"Of course I didn't," responded David, "with his boy adrift and his heart broken clean in two. It was a silly notion of yours to begin with."

"Well, you needn't bite my head off," growled Mr. Becket, as they shouldered their

way into the tiny living room. Margaret called blithely from the birdcage of a kitchen.

"Do keep Mr. Becket away from here, Davy. Every time he turns around or takes a long breath, he breaks a dish or upsets something. He ought to live out-doors."

Captain John was beaming a welcome as he hauled David by the collar to a seat on the sofa beside him, and declared:

"You'd be a mate next year if you had chosen sail instead of steam, you strapping big lump of a lad. You are the kind of Yankee sailor they used to breed in my early days at sea. How many years more do you serve in your old machine shop before you get your papers?"

"Three or four," cheerfully replied David. "And even then I won't be fit to be left in charge of the ship for a minute. A fourth officer is mighty small potatoes in my trade."

"I was master of a deep-water ship when I was twenty-one," said Captain John. "Ah, those days are gone. Tell us all about this boy that was lost with the yacht."

"He isn't lost," stoutly returned David. "With good weather they will be picked up. I'm sure of it."

"The sea is very cruel, Davy," murmured the skipper, and his face clouded with sad memories of his boy lost with Margaret's mother. The "little girl" peered anxiously from the kitchen door and tried to shift the topic to happier themes:

"Just think what Davy's been through all in one year, and he lives to tell it, so let's enjoy him while we can. We mustn't even mention the whiskers of Mr. Becket's skipper and his awful tale of woe."

"There's a master wanted in a Jamaica fruiter," observed Mr. Becket. "But my old skipper is trying to do me with the owners. However, they can't keep a good man down, and you will stand by your friends, blow high, blow low, won't you, Davy?"

Supper was on the table and Margaret waited on her hungry crew with pretty anxiety to play well her part in this festal reunion. She consented to sit down with them when it came to serving the apple pie which she herself had

made. Mr. Becket demanded Captain John's old-fashioned quadrant with which to measure off the exact number of degrees of pie each was entitled to, and nearly upset the table before this mathematical problem was adjusted. In the midst of the excitement the door-bell buzzed. Mr. Becket sprang to the speaking-tube as if he were in a wheel-house and shouted:

"Below there. What's wanted?"

While he cocked his head to listen, his face began to express the most intense amazement, and his reply was absurdly meek, as he cried:

"Yes, sir. Very good, sir. The dickens it is. Two flights up, and don't break your precious neck on the dark landings, sir."

Turning to the puzzled listeners, Mr. Becket explained in a flurried tone:

"It is Mr. Stanley P. Cochran, no less, and none other. Now what *do* you think of that?"

Margaret whisked off her apron and began to clear away the dishes, pie and all, but Captain John stopped her with:

"Stay as you are, girlie. Nobody's ashamed of sitting down to a square meal. Mr. Cochran is just a poor, grieving daddy, that's all."

"Oh, maybe he has good news for Davy," cried Margaret. "You run out and meet him, David."

Mr. Cochran entered the door a moment later, with the air of an intruder. He hesitated in the doorway of the crowded little room and fumbled with his hat.

"Plenty of room at the table," said Captain John, rising and holding out his hand. "Becket, you hang yourself out on the fire-escape and make room for Mr. Cochran. Margaret, a plate and another cup of coffee."

"These are my best friends, Mr. Cochran," put in David, presenting them by name. "We have sort of adopted each other all round."

Mr. Cochran sank into a chair, while Margaret timidly asked him:

"Will you have a piece of my apple pie, sir? These sailor men seem to like it."

"It is simply grand," rumbled Mr. Becket from the window.

The visitor looked about him. Something in the homely cheer and affection of this atmosphere seemed to touch his emotions. His

eyes were moist and his voice was not quite steady as he thanked Margaret and then said to David:

"You are lucky to have such friends, and they have made no mistake in you. I went down to the ship to find you and the bos'n sent me here. I—I was asked to come, and——"

He hesitated, bit his lip, and waited, as if trying to keep his voice under better control.

"Is there any news?" asked David.

"Not yet. But his mother wants you to come up and see her this evening. She asked me to find you. Of course I came. It seems that our boy took it more to heart than I had any idea of—when I disappointed him about your coming to visit him last year. He told his mother—but he didn't say very much to me. And he has had so few boy friends."

It was pitiful to hear this pleading, remorseful speech from such a man as Stanley P. Cochran had always been. Captain John's kindly face was twitching, while he murmured, as if talking to himself:

"I once had an only son."

"Of course I'll go with you," said David, as he rose from the table. "You will excuse me, won't you, folks?"

There was so much hearty sympathy in their response that Mr. Cochran smiled a little wistfully, as if he wished to stay longer in this simple, genuine circle of friends. They were not awed by his name, they did not cringe before his wealth, and they seemed to have found the secret of contentment, in what, to him, seemed like dire poverty. He could pour out his heart about his boy to people like these, and they would understand.

"I hate to take you away," he said at length. "But his mother will be waiting for us."

"Don't you stay here a minute longer, Davy," urged Margaret. "And be just as cheerful as you can. We are all praying for your son, Mr. Cochran, and we know that he will come back to you."

The millionaire wavered and picked up the cup of coffee with a sheepish air.

"I haven't eaten a bite to-day," said he. "But the smell of things here makes me hungry, I really believe."

"A bit of that chicken salad, and a chop, and a section of our peerless apple pie will make a new man of you," spoke up the half-hidden Mr. Becket, who was feeling more at ease. The guest seemed grateful for this sound advice, and appeared to relish his hasty meal. Before he finished he said, not at all as if he were doing a favor, but as one friend to another:

"Captain Bracewell, I wish you and your charming granddaughter and Mr. Becket and David Downes would do me the pleasure of dining at my house some night this week. Arthur's mother and I find it very lonesome, and it will help to keep her from brooding."

Captain John was too used to being a master among men to be at all agitated by this unexpected invitation, but Margaret fluttered between dining-room and kitchen in much excitement. Mr. Becket was stricken dumb and could only make signals of distress.

"I will answer for us all," returned Captain John. "If it will cheer up you and your wife to see us plain seafaring folks, we will accept, with hearty thanks."

Mr. Cochran expressed his gratitude, as if they were doing him a kindness, and departed, with David in his wake. As these two rolled up town in the millionaire's automobile, Mr. Cochran observed, after a long silence:

"I like those friends of yours. I wish I could have known them before. Arthur would enjoy them."

It was on the tip of David's tongue to tell him that these were the people whom he had preferred to see on that day a year ago when Mr. Cochran had flown into a rage and cast him off. But this was no time to recall old misunderstandings. All David could do was to wait in patience, and hope that Mr. Cochran might discover what a splendid man Captain John was, and take an interest in him on his own account.

The automobile halted in front of a huge stone mansion in upper Fifth Avenue. It looked more like a castle than a home. The immense tapestry-hung parlors, past which David was led, were silent and cheerless. Captain John's flat was far more cheery and livable than these

gloomy apartments, thought David, as he followed his host up the echoing marble staircase to the second story.

Presently they came to a smaller room which looked as if people really lived in it. A slender woman in black rose from a divan to greet them. In her smile there was the timid, tremulous sweetness which had made her boy so attractive to David on first acquaintance. There could have been little in common between her and the hard, domineering father until a great grief bridged the gulf that had grown between them. Even now, she looked at Mr. Cochran with an appealing glance, as if waiting for him to speak. David wanted to pick her up in his strong young arms and comfort her.

"So this is the boy that Arthur said he wished he could be like," were her first words, as she looked up at David's brown face and well-set shoulders. "Why, you are not a boy. You are a man."

"I've grown a lot in the last year, and sea life agrees with me," laughed David, with a blush at her frank admiration.

"That is what the doctors told Mr. Cochran when he planned the trip abroad for Arthur, in the yacht," sighed the mother. "He did not ask me to go, because I am such a wretched sailor, I suppose. I expected to join them later in the south of France."

"It is a good deal better for a man's health when he has to work his way," explained David. "Sitting under a yacht's awning all day isn't a bit like having your regular watches to stand in all weathers. When Arthur comes home you will find him fit as a fiddle. Being adrift for a few days will do him good."

"How awful!" exclaimed Mrs. Cochran, nervously clasping her hands. "Why I have done almost nothing except carry out the doctors' orders for his health since he was a baby."

"That may be partly the trouble, mother," remarked Mr. Cochran. "I'd give half I own to see him looking like this big lad here. I met some of his friends to-night. They are coming up to see you soon. You can't help liking them. They are the kind we used to know down East, ages and ages ago, 'when we were so happy and so poor.'"

"If they are anything like David Downes, I know I shall be fond of them," smiled the mother.

Then she fell to telling David all about Arthur's boyhood, and her fond interest in every detail of her son's affairs found such a ready and warm-hearted listener that Mr. Cochran stole away, and left them sitting side by side on the divan. Little by little David's confidence in Arthur's safety began to reassure the tormented mother. The sailor talked to her of the sea with a knowledge born of his experience and of the bright hopefulness of youth. Quite naturally he drifted into telling her about the wreck of the *Pilgrim*, to show how there was chance of escape in the most desperate disaster. Her mother's heart was drawn to the picture of Margaret, as David painted it, in words of loving loyalty and admiration.

"You are like a fresh breeze blowing from a big, fine, wholesome world that we seem to have been shut off from," she cried, as she looked at him with affectionate eyes. "I do believe that Arthur will be brought home to us."

They heard a telephone bell ring in another room. The mother's face became white and tense, and she grasped David's hand and held it fast. There might be some tidings. After minutes that seemed like hours Mr. Cochran entered the room with dragging step and bowed shoulders. He spoke very slowly, as if reluctant to repeat the message which had come to him.

"It was a telegram, mother," said he. "One of the *Restless* boats was picked up at sea—empty. A Cunarder reported it by wireless."

Mrs. Cochran swayed against David, who pulled himself together, and his voice rang out with vibrant conviction:

"It doesn't mean what you think it does. Ten to one some vessel picked them up and cast the boat adrift. And the chances are still even that Arthur was in the other boat. Now is the time to sit tight and hold your nerve."

CHAPTER VIII

YANKEE TOPSAILS

A WEARY week passed, without tidings of the castaways of the *Restless*. Arthur Cochran's mother lost heart, and refused to be comforted. She seemed to be letting go her hold on life, and her husband, as if seeking to atone for the years in which he had allowed his worldly interests to absorb his time and thought, was seldom away from her. His devotion was tender and whole-hearted. The visit of the Bracewell household had been postponed. Mrs. Cochran was too ill to leave her room, and even David had to be denied the pleasure of seeing her again, much as she longed to talk to him about her beloved son.

The week of shore leave ended and David said good-by to his "dearest folks" in the tiny flat and posted off to Philadelphia to report on board the *Roanoke*. He was glad,

too, beyond measure, to learn that Captain Thrasher had been cleared of all blame for the collision, and would stay in his command.

"It was vat you call a tight squeak," explained David's faithful shipmate, the bos'n. "They tells me the Board asks the old man why don't he get out and push the iceberg to one side, or some such foolishness. But he proves he was usin' all proper care, and they can't give him the sack, eh? Mr. Cochran, the money-bags vat we picked up, he vas very mad mit our old man at first, but he cool down by and by and see vat a idiot he vas. And he gets some gratitude under his belt, and puts in a word for the old man, I t'ink. Stanley P. Cochran is very strong mit the company. He owns much stock."

So Mr. Cochran had gone out of his way to befriend the captain of the *Roanoke*, reflected David. It showed that the great man had a sense of fair play and square dealing if his eyes were once opened. If there was only some way to enlist this powerful interest in Captain John's behalf, without making it seem like asking charity. If Arthur should be saved

from the sea, the way might be found. The master of the *Pilgrim* was growing old before his time, while he ate out his heart in vain hopes. He was proud and independent to a fault, and David knew he would starve sooner than crowd another man out of his berth. While in New York David had taken pains to learn that none of the sailing ships in Mr. Cochran's sugar-carrying trade were without masters, and for the present he could see no help in that quarter.

One week followed another, and David found no chance to go to New York again. One of his letters from Margaret told him:

"Mrs. Cochran sent for me to go and see her yesterday. Grandfather took me up and was going to sit on the front steps and wait, but the servants took him in tow and he was invited up-stairs with me. Mr. Cochran must have said some nice things about poor little me. She was very sweet and lovely, but so sad looking. And she wanted to know if I would show her how to make an apple pie. There are at least twenty servants in their crew, Davy, and imagine me making apple

pies in that house. What makes such very rich people seem so dreadfully lonesome? She explained that Arthur's boy friends were all out of town, and that he didn't have many anyhow.

"They have sense enough to know that you are a wonderful Big Brother, which is why I like them. Grandfather told her all sorts of cheerful yarns about people who were not heard of at sea for weeks and weeks, and then came into port all safe and smiling. She seemed to have faith in that simple, quiet way of his, when he leans forward and looks you straight in the eyes as he talks. She asked him had he given up going to sea, and he told her yes. And I spoke right up as bold as anything:

"'It isn't because he wants to, but because sailing ships are so scarce. He never would have anything to do with steam.'

"She did not quite understand, but he shut me up before I could tell her that he was one of the finest ship-masters that ever cracked on sail in a gale of wind. Won't we see you again before we sail, Davy? I am sending a box of

apple pies by express. I made them with my own fair hands, and one of them is specially for the bos'n, with his initials on the crust. Mr. Becket says I ought to have put on, 'FOR A DUTCH HUMBUG.'"

Davy duly delivered the pie and Mr. Becket's message, and was thanked for the one and cuffed over the head for the other.

The *Roanoke* was almost ready for sea a few days later, when a telegram came aboard for David. He opened the envelope with stumbling fingers, fearing something might have happened to his "dearest folks." The message was from Mr. Cochran, however, and said no more than:

"There may be good news for us. Cannot tell yet. Try to come at once."

David showed the message to the chief officer, who advised him to take it to Captain Thrasher. That august personage said at once:

"Jump right along with you. Give Mr. Cochran my best regards, and tell him to send you back as soon as he can."

On the train bound for New York David tried to fathom the meaning of the uncertain tidings. Either Arthur had been saved or he had not, but apparently the father was waiting for more information. When David jumped from the car in the Jersey City station, he was surprised to see Mr. Cochran waiting for him, with every sign of impatient haste.

"Come along, youngster," he called at the top of his voice. "I have a tug with steam up right here by the ferry dock."

He grasped David's arm and they charged pell-mell through the crowd. Mr. Cochran had no breath to spare until they had scrambled from the string-piece of the pier to the deck of a sea-going tug, whose escape valve was roaring in a cloud of steam. Orders were shouted, a bell clanged, another jingled, and the tug was racing down the North River toward the Bay.

"Mrs. Cochran was not strong enough to come," panted her husband as he mopped his face. "And we may be disappointed after all. I can't stand much more of a strain myself. But we shall know in three or four hours, I hope."

"What—why—how do you know?" stammered David, whose head felt dazed.

"Only that a tramp steamer arriving this morning reported being signalled by a sailing ship, the *Sea Witch*, that she had on board part of the crew of a yacht. It was blowing hard when the vessels sighted each other, and the captain of the tramp could not read the flags distinctly."

"But where was the *Sea Witch* when sighted, and whither bound?"

"Liverpool to New York—a hundred and fifty miles out, twenty-four hours ago. The wind has shifted to fair for her since midnight, and she will be in sight of Sandy Hook before dark."

"Of course Arthur is aboard," cried David, with buoyant faith.

The father said nothing. Perhaps he was thinking of the sufferings which had killed so many strong men adrift in open boats. And this boy of his was a weakling, used to the constant care and luxury which wealth had lavished on him. David tried to rouse him from his reflections by saying:

"The *Sea Witch* is the finest and smartest ship of her class afloat, sir. She is the largest four-masted sailing ship that flies the American flag. I'd give a lot to see her."

"I believe I control some kind of a fleet of barks and ships in my sugar business," replied Mr. Cochran, "but I haven't paid much attention to them. Don't believe I ever laid eyes on one of them. But I don't recall hearing of the *Sea Witch*."

"Almost four thousand tons, and sailing mostly to the Orient with case oil," added David. "I know a man that was in her."

The tug churned her way through the Narrows and lifted her bow to the swell of the Bay. Mr. Cochran had become lost in his own thoughts as he stared from a wheel-house window, while David swapped briny yarns with the mate.

"The *Sea Witch* was spoken three hundred miles out, a week ago," said the mate. "Then she was blown to sea, and now she's piling in again with the wind where she wants it."

The green sea opened ahead, and the tug plunged her guard rail under as her skipper

crowded a good thirteen knots out of her. The Navesink Highlands became vague and misty over her stern, and still her course was held toward the east-south-east.

"The *Sea Witch* ought to be showing us her royals before long," said the skipper.

He had no more than spoken when the mate shouted: "There she is, right to the minute. A point off the port bow."

Swiftly the white patch crept above the horizon; sail by sail the gleaming canvas of the *Sea Witch* lifted fair and graceful, until her black hull was visible as a mere dot beneath the immense sweep of her snowy wings. Every stitch of cloth she could spread was pulling her homeward. David had been at sea for more than a year without glimpsing such a noble picture as this. When they had run close enough to make out the stars and stripes whipping from the mizzen of the *Sea Witch* like a tongue of flame, he drew a long breath and felt little chills run up and down his back. Now he began to understand what the sea and its ships meant to Captain John Bracewell, ship-master of the old school.

Mr. Cochran had no eyes for the rare beauty of the *Sea Witch* under full sail. He was leaning far out of his window, imploring the captain of the tug to make more speed. When the two vessels were a half mile apart, a string of signal bunting soared to the tug's mast-head, announcing: "Wish to speak to you, most important."

After a little interval, the *Sea Witch* signalled back:

"Can't stop. What is your business?"

"Oh, quit that foolishness," groaned Mr. Cochran, wringing his hands. "Run alongside and speak her as soon as you can."

The tug swept round in a foaming arc, and came up on the lee side of the four-master, which was surging home like a race-horse. A long line of heads bobbed above the bulwark in the waist of the *Sea Witch*, and presently a slim young figure danced up the poop ladder and climbed on top of the cabin.

"That looks like him," cried Mr. Cochran, "but he was never as frisky as that in all his life."

The excited David thumped the magnate between the shoulders, and yelled:

"Of course it's Arthur. I can make him out as plain as daylight."

The tug sheered closer and closer at top speed, but she was rapidly dropping astern of the flying ship. The agile figure on the cabin roof caught up a speaking-trumpet and piped shrilly:

"Daddy, ahoy! It's me! How's mother?"

The father scrambled on deck and bawled with arms outstretched:

"All well, you little rascal! Are all hands with you?"

"There they are in the waist. All the men in our boat. Count 'em for yourself. All present and accounted for, down to the cook's pet monkey. Anybody lost of your company? And has the other boat been picked up?"

"We were all saved, thank God. No, the second boat has not been heard from yet. Here's a youngster who can tell you all about our end of it."

Arthur failed to recognize at long range the *Roanoke* cadet whom he had last seen in bed with a bandaged head. David shouted a wel-

come, but it was lost in the stentorian roar of the captain of the *Sea Witch:*

"I'll lay my main-yard aback and put your lad aboard, Mr. Cochran. I wouldn't do it for anybody else but his daddy."

The tug dropped farther astern, and the towering square rigger began to slacken her rushing speed as her mighty yards were swung round. Then as she lay at rest, a rope ladder was dropped overside, and young Arthur Cochran swarmed down it as if he had been the pet monkey saved from the yacht. A boat from the tug was waiting, and Mr. Cochran, rising in the stern-sheets, fairly grabbed the boy in his arms and hugged him like a bear. Arthur struggled to get his breath and sputtered:

"Tell the *Restless* men you're glad to see them, father. They were mighty good to me."

"I *am* an unfeeling brute, but I couldn't think of anything else than getting my hands on you. *Sea Witch*, ahoy! A glad welcome home to the *Restless* captain and his men. Report at my office on landing, and you won't be sorry that you sailed with me! I feel sure

that the rest of the crew have been saved and will be reported soon."

As soon as they were aboard the tug, Mr. Cochran began to take stock of his son and heir. Instead of the wasted invalid he had dreaded to find, this survivor was tanned, clear-eyed, and vigorous.

"What kind of a miracle has happened to you?" he asked. "Your mother won't know you."

"Plain grub and hard work, I guess," grinned Arthur. "We were adrift four days, and I got a razor edge on my appetite. Three weeks aboard the *Sea Witch* did the rest. The captain said I'd been coddled to death as soon as he found out who I was, and you bet he kept me busy. Why, I helped reef the fore-topgallant sail last night."

Mr. Cochran glanced up at the dizzy yards of the *Sea Witch* and shuddered. Then Arthur found time to stare hard at David, who was tactfully keeping in the background.

"Well, I'll be jiggered! It's you, is it?" shouted Arthur. "This is better luck than I counted on. So you two have made it up?

Fine! Father was horrid mean to you. I suppose you picked him up at sea. Rescuing folks seems to be one of your steady habits."

"You have guessed right," laughed David. "There was more than one sunny side to the loss of the *Restless*. It's an ill wind that blows nobody good."

While the tug sped toward Sandy Hook, Mr. Cochran and his boy sat in the skipper's little room abaft the wheel-house and talked to their heart's content. David was wise enough to leave them alone, and with peace in his heart he gazed at the *Sea Witch*, which, scorning a tow-boat, was driving astern of them. The signal station at Sandy Hook was told to telegraph the good news ahead, and long before they landed newsboys were crying "Evening Extras," with the return of Stanley P. Cochran's son emblazoned in head-lines of blue and red.

David said good-by at the wharf, but Arthur stoutly refused to let him go.

"I haven't had a chance to see you more than a minute," exclaimed the jubilant castaway. "Hang your old ship! Let her wait.

Father will wire the captain for you. Now is the glad time to work Mr. Stanley P. Cochran for most any old thing."

"You don't know Captain Stephen Thrasher," said his father. "I tried to buy him and his ship once. He has asked me to send David back to the *Roanoke* as soon as possible, and he meant exactly what he said. I have learned to let seafaring people have their own way. They are a terribly obstinate lot," and he winked comically at David.

No longer afraid of Mr. Cochran's wrath, David told him:

"I must catch the next train to Philadelphia. Give my love to Mrs. Cochran, please, and the Bracewells, if you happen to see them."

"Why, bless me," declared Mr. Cochran, "have you come to New York without a chance to see your folks? That's absurd. It was very selfish of me to kidnap you, I'm sure, but there was no one else I wanted to take out to meet the *Sea Witch*."

"Never mind. I can write them before I sail," and with this David set off for the ferry at a smart trot. When he reported aboard

the *Roanoke* in the evening, Captain Thrasher was just going ashore.

"What news?" he halted to ask. "Young Cochran safe in port? Well, well, I am very thankful to hear it. What ship found them? The *Sea Witch*? Why I know her master well. Dried-up little man with a white goatee?"

This described the man who had shouted orders from the quarter-deck of the *Sea Witch*, and David meekly answered, "Yes, sir."

"Seventy, if he is a day, and tough as a pine knot," concluded Captain Thrasher. "He was master of a ship when I went to sea as a boy."

Before David turned in he wrote to Margaret, and wound up with:

"You never saw such a beautiful ship in your life as the *Sea Witch*. Be sure to take Captain John down to see her when she docks. If there were only really and truly fairies, or if I had a magic wand, I would wave it around Mr. Cochran's head and ask him to buy the *Sea Witch* and put Captain John in her, instead of the frosted old pippin that is master of her. She almost makes me wish I had not gone into steam. Oh, if you could have seen her under

full sail—but what is the use of my raving about the *Sea Witch?* Good-night, and God bless you all."

The *Roanoke* was almost ready to proceed straight to Southampton for a thorough overhauling after the patch-work repairs made to enable her to cross the Atlantic in safety. There was no excitement about this kind of a departure, and on the morning of sailing her empty decks made David feel a little homesick. He was sent ashore with a bundle of the captain's farewell letters, and on his way back dodged a cab which was rattling down to the wharf in runaway fashion. A volley of "Whoas" and "Hullos" came from inside, and wheeling about, David saw the head of Arthur Cochran poked out of the window.

"Ahoy, there," he shouted, pushing open the door, and alighting fairly on top of David before the driver could pull up his sweating steed. "Father came over on business, and I coaxed him into letting me come along, on the chance of seeing you."

"Come aboard," said David, joyfully. "We're ready to cast off, but there will be a

few minutes to spare, I guess. You don't look a shipwrecked sailor, not a little bit."

"I have met those pals of yours," confided Arthur as they hurried up the gangway. "And they are just bully, aren't they? They are the real thing. Mother dotes on the dear little sister, and she *is* a dear, and Captain Bracewell is a copper-fastened A1 old-time Yankee sailor, that you read about in books. Say, but he is a brick, a whole ton of 'em. And, oh, you will be tickled to death to hear that the other *Restless* boat was found by a steamer which carried the men to Liverpool."

"Good enough," cried David. "That is the bulliest kind of news."

Elated as he was to learn that all the yacht's crew had been accounted for, the praise of Margaret made David wince a trifle in spite of himself. Jealousy had never invaded his feelings toward the "little sister." He wanted Arthur to like his "dearest folks," but it was not easy to think of sharing their affection. Beating down this ungenerous emotion with a very manly spirit, David cordially agreed:

"They are the salt of the earth, Arthur, and I am mighty glad you like them. They worried themselves almost sick about you. What about Mr. Becket? Have you met him?"

"He looked me up yesterday, and was so full of mystery that I couldn't make head or tail of him. He got almost to the point of telling me something, and then he sheered off on another tack, rubbed his red head, sighed, looked out of the window, and muttered something about guessing he'd have to see you first."

"Was it anything about Captain Bracewell?"

"He never got that far. He seemed to be in the last stages of buck-fever or acute rattles. But he doesn't look like a timid man."

David was called forward, and while Arthur kicked his heels on a bench by the gangway, Captain Thrasher happened along, on his way to the bridge.

"My father, Mr. Cochran, sends you his warmest regards," said Arthur, "and wishes you a luckier voyage than the last."

"So you are the young nine-days' wonder, are you? You look as if sea life agreed with you."

"That's what everybody says, Captain, and I am trying to persuade mother to let me go for a long voyage. My, but I should like to go out in the *Sea Witch* to Japan."

"No finer sailing vessel afloat," said Captain Thrasher. "How is that old barnacle that commands her? Bad-tempered as ever?"

"He is pretty violent," smiled Arthur. "But he is done with the sea. This was his last voyage. He told me he was going home to Maine as quick as the Lord would let him, and raise potatoes and cabbages, 'gosh whang it.' He has been at sea fifty-seven years."

"Who will take her out?"

"The mate expects to get her, sir. But he is a pie-faced, wooden-headed Norwegian, with a thirst for rum. I didn't take to him at all."

"Too bad to see a Norwegian in command of the finest Yankee ship afloat," was Captain Thrasher's comment as he went on his way.

Fifteen minutes passed and David had not returned. It was like hunting a needle in a hay-stack to look for him, and Arthur fidgeted where he was until the deck officer warned him that it was time to go ashore. Then David

came running aft, just as the *Roanoke* blew a long blast to let all hands know she was ready to cast off.

"I had to tally a lot of stores that just came aboard for the paint room," panted David. "It is a shame that I can't hear all about what happened to you at sea. But I'll be back in a few weeks."

Arthur shouted his farewells, as he ran to the wharf, while David said to himself, with sorrowful countenance:

"And I never got in a word for Captain John."

He would have been more regretful could he have overheard the news about the command of the *Sea Witch* as Arthur had told it to Captain Thrasher.

CHAPTER IX

CAPTAIN BRACEWELL'S SHIP

DAVID had been gone a week, when Arthur Cochran announced to his father:

"There is no sense in waiting till David, the bold sailor boy, comes home from sea. I want to ask the Bracewells and Mr. Becket up to dinner. You postponed it once, before I turned up, and anyhow you owe them a dinner to square yourself for the apple pie you got away with."

Since their disaster at sea the domineering manner of Mr. Cochran toward his son had changed to a relation of good comradeship, in which Arthur no longer feared and trembled. His timid smile had become frank and boyish, and he carried himself in a way that made his father proud of him.

"By all means," heartily replied Mr. Cochran. "It won't hurt you to know folks who don't care a rap for your money, and who are

not looking for a chance to pull your leg. They preach a healthy gospel by just living along in their own way."

Arthur's mother mildly suggested that the dinner await David's return, but she was routed by the argument:

"That will be an excuse for another dinner. The more, the merrier."

Thereupon she offered her services as a partner in his plans, and between them they devised all manner of novel decorations and surprises. The thing which pleased them most was a lake of real water that extended the length of the dining table, and upon which floated two toy vessels. One of them was the model of a full-rigged sailing ship, the other of an ocean steamer, with a black star between her funnels. They were christened the *Sea Witch* and the *Roanoke*. For the bridge of the liner Arthur found a most dashing miniature captain in blue, who was tagged, in honor of the absent friend, "Captain David Downes."

The guests arrived fairly calm, but somewhat awed by their surroundings. Captain John, in his Sunday black, loomed like a benevolent

Viking. His massive, clean-shaven face had lost its sea tan, but he was as fine a specimen of the American ship-master as could have been found in his almost vanished generation. Margaret, dressed in white, with a rose in her fair hair, was winsomely girlish, enjoying every moment of this red-letter night. Mr. Becket's rolling gait put the costly bric-a-brac in some danger, and he would insist on making side remarks to the servants, but Margaret was a skilful pilot, and steered him in safety to the haven of the dining-room.

"I don't quite figure out how it all happened," said Captain Bracewell, from his chair at Mrs. Cochran's right hand, "but we are all glad to be here, ma'am. Most of us have been saved by the Lord's grace from the perils of the deep. But the boy who fetched us all together is absent from us, and I move we drink his health standing."

While the company toasted the young able seaman of the *Roanoke*, Arthur cried:

"And here's to all ships and sailors, their sisters, sweethearts, and wives."

He glanced at Margaret with so mischievous a twinkle in his dancing eyes that she felt her

cheek grow hot, for no reason at all, of course. Mr. Becket made a diversion, however, by pensively observing:

"There was a black-eyed senorita in Valparaiso. But she hasn't written me in eleven years, and I couldn't read it if she did. But I hereby drink to her most hearty."

Captain Bracewell's bold and resolute manner, which became him so well, was returning in the enjoyment of this festal occasion. The weary year of disappointment and failure was forgotten for the time. He seemed to grow younger as the dinner wore on. Mr. Cochran, who knew men and how to draw them out, was shrewdly studying this fine figure of a mariner. There was more behind that square-hewn face than simple honesty and loyalty. The man of wealth and power had lost some of his former contempt for those who could not "make money." Perhaps more than he realized, he had learned new values of men from David Downes. But why should Captain Bracewell have quit his calling, reflected Mr. Cochran, while he was still fit for years of command? "He is not a day over sixty," the host

was saying to himself, "and he looks as sturdy as an oak tree." Mr. Cochran did not know that there had been a kind of blind conspiracy to hide the truth from him. David had let slip his chance to confide in Arthur; Captain John would not have dreamed of presuming on Mr. Cochran's friendship; while Mr. Becket had lost his daring at a critical moment.

Their well-meaning secrecy, their fond hopes and wishes, were revealed without warning, and without any prompting of their own. They were talking about the two little ships which swam so proudly on the lake between them. Mock congratulations were showered upon the absurd figure of a doll, which stood so stiffly on the tiny liner's bridge. Margaret called out playfully:

"Why don't you toot your whistle and salute us, Captain Downes? Too haughty and stuck-up, I suppose, like all you steamer captains."

"S–s–s–sh. He is on duty," chided Arthur. "No talking on the bridge."

"He can have his old steamer," flung back Margaret. "I'll take the *Sea Witch* yonder, every time. Oh, isn't she just beautiful, even as a toy?"

The blood of a long line of sailor ancestors thrilled in Margaret's veins, as she clasped her hands and leaned forward to waft her breath against the white sails of the clipper ship. The *Sea Witch* dipped to this fair gale, gathered headway, and furrowed the pond with a wake of tiny ripples. Her bowsprit pointed straight at Captain Bracewell, and fanned by the breath of the guests as she passed them, the *Sea Witch* glided without swerving from her course to the mossy bank in front of the captain's plate.

"But she hasn't any skipper," cried Arthur. "That doll on her quarter-deck must be the mutton-headed Norwegian mate. Chuck him overboard, mother. He's no good."

With a gay laugh, Mrs. Cochran tossed the luckless manikin into the water, where he sank to the bottom without a struggle, and reposed against a rock with arms calmly folded across his chest. The heartless onlookers applauded this tragedy, all save Captain John, who was looking down at the ship. Perhaps he had a trace of the superstition which can be found in the hardest-headed seafarer. The *Sea Witch*, without a captain, had laid her course for him, and

was waiting on the shore. This make-believe voyage might be a good omen.

Arthur had an inspiration, while the attention of the others was drawn to Captain John and the fairy ship. Springing to his feet, he flourished his napkin in the air, and shouted:

"What's the matter with Captain John Bracewell as master of the *Sea Witch?* Wouldn't as fine a ship as this persuade you to go to sea again?"

Margaret was thrown into confusion, and Mr. Becket was taken all aback, but Captain John smiled and threw back his shoulders, as he gently answered:

"I should like nothing better, but her owners don't see it that way."

"Who owns the *Sea Witch?*" spoke up Mr. Cochran.

"Burgess, Jones & Company. She is the last of their four-masted ships that were built for the Far Eastern trade," said Captain John.

"Why, it is plain as the nose on your face," declared the headlong Arthur, who was taking full command of the situation. "Don't let her be turned into a coal barge, father. That

is what they talk of doing with her after one more voyage. She can be made to pay her way with your brains back of her. Buy her to-morrow. I'll get you all the facts and figures. And one long voyage in her is what I need to make me as husky as David Downes."

Matters were moving too fast for the guests. Mr. Becket's face was fairly purple with suppressed emotions, and he could only pound the table in a dazed kind of way and mutter:

"Exactly what I tried to tell him. Exactly it. But I got hung on a dead centre."

Captain Bracewell raised his hand to command silence. He was anxious to pull Mr. Cochran out of an awkward situation, and did his best to make light of the discussion by saying:

"It is just a boy's fancy, sir. Don't mind him. He means well. We will just call it a bit of fun, and forget it. Besides, I'm asking no favors from anybody."

Captain John had risen to his feet, and was bending toward his host. Mr. Cochran looked up with frank admiration at the imposing figure which faced him, and returned:

"Arthur goes off at half-cock a good deal. But there is a grain or two of sense in him. Suppose we talk this matter over to-morrow, Captain. I am a business man, and you are pretty solidly ballasted yourself. I don't want to fling a lot of money into the sea, nor do you wish any position that comes to you as a whim."

But Arthur was not ready to dismiss his great idea, until he noticed that his mother's face was full of suffering and her dear eyes were moist with tears. He went around to her and kissed her cheek, as he asked what the trouble might be.

"I hope you can make Captain Bracewell happy," she whispered. "But I can't let you go to sea again so soon. You must not leave me now, when I feel as if you had been given back to me from the grave. You won't go, will you, if you can feel strong and well at home with us?"

The boy responded with impulsive tenderness:

"Not if you feel that way about it, mother. And I am going to stay strong and fit, anyway. But you will help me to get the *Sea Witch* for the captain, won't you?"

The father was thinking as he watched them that it was worth a great deal to have his only son learn lessons of unselfishness; to see him more absorbed in the welfare of others than in his own interests. Mr. Becket said to Margaret, in what was meant for a whisper:

"The lad couldn't know our David very long without getting some of that help-the-other-fellow spirit. Our boy has always been studying what he could do for you and Captain John. He even has me on his mind these days."

Mr. Becket's whisper was heard the length of the table, and Arthur's father commented with a smile:

"I guess you are right, Mr. Becket, but why on earth didn't David let me know that the captain wanted a ship?"

"Because you blackguarded and scolded him out of his boots when he stuck to these friends of his, last year," bravely returned the aroused Mr. Becket. "And our boy don't crawl on his knees to no millionaires, potentates, or boo-jums. That's one reason."

With tactful desire to restore peace, Mrs. Cochran signalled to a servant, and a phono-

graph hidden in the palms began to play "Nancy Lee." The *Sea Witch* was not mentioned again until the guests were ready to take their leave, when Margaret slipped up to Mrs. Cochran and confided with fluttering voice:

"Please don't think we ever hinted the least thing to Mr. Arthur about our looking for a vessel. It is lovely to know that you think so much of grandfather. And Mr. Becket and I will try to make him understand that it was all a joke to-night. I can't bear to think of his taking it the least bit in earnest. We just can't have him down in the dumps again."

"Don't worry, Margaret," Arthur's mother responded, caressing the girl's shining hair. "Things will work out for the best somehow, for such a dear, brave child and such a splendid grandfather."

Captain Bracewell passed a sleepless night, his mind restless with new-born hopes. It could not be true, it was not even sane to expect that he might walk the quarter-deck of the *Sea Witch*, a bigger, finer ship than he had ever been master of in his prime. And to talk of buying her as if she were the toy which had

floated on the dinner table! It was all stark nonsense, yet his kindled imagination could not help painting bright pictures. Margaret heard him muttering to himself in the night watches, and stole to his bedside. The captain put his arms around the slim figure in white, and drew her to him.

"I haven't slept a wink, either," she whispered. "You will take me with you in the *Sea Witch*, won't you? But we will be so far away from David."

Captain John chuckled:

"Why, you are the girlie who was telling me all the way home that I must take it as a bit of fun. What has come over you?"

"I just can't help believing it is going to come true," she answered. "I guess we are two silly children. But will you try to coax David to ship with you?"

"So that is what is keeping you awake," he responded, very tenderly. "Nothing would be too good for the lad if he were in my vessel, you know that. But our chickens aren't hatched, and you'd better turn in, and thank God for all the blessings we have."

Next morning Captain Bracewell trudged off to his gang of longshoremen on a North River pier. As he turned along the crowded water front, a four-masted sailing ship was being towed into a berth among the low-roofed warehouses. He stared with surprise at the rare sight, and thrilled to note the immense height of her masts and the majestic spread of her yards. Beside the uncouth ocean steamers, she appeared queenly beyond words. Without going nearer, Captain Bracewell knew that this must be the *Sea Witch.* He fought with his longing to go aboard and inspect this vessel of his dreams. But deciding that he ought to make himself no more unhappy than possible, he moved on his way, now and then turning for another sight of the "grandest Yankee skysail-yarder afloat."

A few hours later Arthur Cochran rode down town with his father, explaining, by the way:

"The weeks at sea did me lots of good, I'll admit that. But another reason why I feel so much better is that I have quit worrying about myself. If you will give me enough to think about, I won't have time to bother with my

weak chest and spindle legs. But it is a heap more important that I get Captain John ready for sea before David comes home. Wouldn't it be a glorious surprise for him?"

"Give me time to think it over, Arthur. Maybe Burgess, Jones & Company will be glad to do me a favor without making it necessary to buy a ship. Why, I own a fleet of them, come to think of it."

"But they are not in the same class with the *Sea Witch*, father, and I want to own her myself. It is a good way to break me in to business before I am ready to go to college. Outbound freights have jumped in the last week and now is the time to buy or charter."

"I begin to think you are a chip of the old block, my son," said Mr. Cochran, not at all displeased. "Maybe I can see you through on this shipping deal. Come to my office at noon, after I have had time to send a man out to investigate."

Arthur was not letting the grass grow under his feet. He posted down to the wharf to find Captain Bracewell, and implored that busy stevedore:

"I want all the figures to show the cost of running a four-masted ship, wages, stores, repairs, and so on. Dig it up in a hurry, please, for I may be a ship-owner by afternoon. Let your roustabouts have a ten minutes' rest."

There was no such thing as heading Arthur off. He volleyed questions like a rapid-fire gun. No sooner had his flying pencil scrawled the last row of figures than he fled from the wharf. Noon found him waiting in the ante-room of his father's private offices, chewing his pencil stub and scanning many rumpled pages of calculations. Presently a clerk beckoned him, and the door of the inner office was closed behind the budding shipping merchant. An hour later he bobbed out with an excited air and announced to the confidential secretary:

"Mr. Cochran says to have room number eighteen fitted up as an office, if you please. I shall use it hereafter. I want the door lettered,

'ARTHUR L. COCHRAN, SHIP-OWNER.'"

A messenger found Captain Bracewell eating his dinner at home. Margaret was trembling as she noticed that the note was written

on the office stationery of Stanley P. Cochran. Her grandfather was outwardly calm, as he read aloud:

CAPTAIN JOHN BRACEWELL:

Dear Sir: This is to offer you the command of the ship *Sea Witch*, which is now lying at Pier 38, North River, in this port. If you will accept the position, please call at my office at your earliest convenience to arrange terms, etc.

Sincerely yours,
ARTHUR L. COCHRAN, *Agent and Owner.*

"Listen to that, his daddy all over again," roared the ship-master. "I shall have to toe the mark now. Well, it's come true. It's come true, girlie. And our lad David did it all."

He knelt by the table, as if this were the first thing to be done, and Margaret was kneeling beside him as he gave thanks to the God in whom he had put his trust, afloat and ashore.

"We must send a cablegram to David," quavered Margaret, sobbing for sheer joy. "And tell him he *must* sail with us."

Three thousand miles away a lad in sailor blue was mending awnings on a liner's deck. He did not look happy as he plied the sail-

needle with vicious jabs, while he thought, half aloud:

"What is the use of having friends if you can't be of any use to them? What good have I been to Captain John and Margaret? Always wanting to help, never doing a thing! I might have got him a ship if I hadn't hung fire so long. Now it's too late. I wish I had never set eyes on those Cochrans. I just amused them, because I was a kind of curiosity, I suppose."

It was a very different David Downes who whooped like a red Indian soon after he went off watch. After dancing along the deck with a cabled message in his fist, he sat down on the edge of his bunk to think things over. Slowly the fact of Captain John's great good fortune slipped into the background, and bigger and bigger loomed the certainty which he could not bear to face.

"A whole year without seeing Margaret," he said to himself, "for she is sure to go in the *Sea Witch*. I never realized what it would mean to have them go to sea again. They must take me, too; I can't bear to be left behind. A whole year without Margaret!"

Then it came over him that he belonged where he had begun, in steam, in the Atlantic service. He was of a different age and breed of seaman from Captain John. Their ways must part. But was not any sacrifice worth while that would give him a chance to sail with Margaret? David was suddenly brought face to face with a new problem which had come into his life without his being aware of it. He must fight it out for himself.

CHAPTER X

THE CALL OF DUTY

CAPTAIN JOHN BRACEWELL'S deep voice was shouting orders to the tug which was making fast to haul the deep-laden *Sea Witch* out from her wharf. She was ready to begin her long voyage around Cape Horn, and the trade winds of the Pacific were calling her. In their first hours aboard, her crew had found that they were in a "smart ship," with a master who knew his trade. No longer a stranded derelict, but a leader of men, gravely rejoicing in the strength and beauty of the *Sea Witch*, Captain Bracewell looked every inch a proper seaman to command this queen of the old-time Yankee merchant marine.

In the spacious after-cabin, bright with the summer sun which flooded through the open skylights, Margaret was saying almost the last of her good-bys. Clusters and bouquets

of flowers, sent by Mr. Cochran, senior, made every shelf and corner gay. Mrs. Cochran and he had made their farewell call and were gone ashore, but Arthur still lingered in the cabin. Beside him stood able seaman David Downes. The young owner of the departing ship was saying to the fair-haired girl:

"I can't stay more than a minute longer. My boat is alongside, and I must get back to my office. I'd like awfully well to go down the Bay with you, but—"

He hesitated, glanced at David and went on with an affectionate smile, which embraced both his friends:

"You may not see your big brother for a year, Miss Margaret. He deserves to have you all to himself to-day."

"Better change your mind and come back in the tug," said David. "This is your ship, you know. And Margaret will love to have you."

She smiled, with lips which slightly trembled, and there was unspoken sadness in her brave eyes, as she told them:

"Indeed I want you both until we have to say good-by. And David has not quite de-

cided to desert us. I am hoping to persuade him yet that he belongs in the *Sea Witch*. We just can't give him up without trying, to the very last minute. But it is going to make no difference, even if the seas do roll between us three. We can't forget you for a moment, either of you. You two have brought us this great gift and blessing—my two big brothers."

Arthur's gaze was wistful, but he answered brightly:

"And your owner is prouder of his master and of you than he is of his fine ship."

"Not to overlook the mate," exclaimed a hearty voice behind them, and Mr. Becket's head blazed grandly in a patch of sunshine, at the foot of the companion-way. "Beg your pardon, Mr. Cochran, but we are in the stream and your boatman wants to cast off. Any orders, sir?"

"I am coming, Mr. Becket. Well, it is good-by, and God bless you, Miss Margaret, and fair winds to you, and clear skies," said Arthur, as he clasped her hand for a moment. Then he followed Mr. Becket on deck. David

ran after them, and as he helped his friend overside, Arthur asked:

"Is it go or stay, with you? The longer you hang in the wind without making up your mind, the worse it will be."

"It's the hardest thing I ever had to decide," replied David. "I sort of went ahead blind, and didn't know how much this was going to mean to me."

"Father and mother and I have begun to find out that you haven't been thinking of yourself at all, from start to finish," cried Arthur. "Maybe that is why all your friends like you."

This unexpected compliment took David aback, and all he could think of to say in parting was:

"You'll hear from me by to-morrow. It's all a game of figuring out what is right to do."

David watched the boat move shoreward, until it dodged behind a string of barges, and then he returned to Margaret in the cabin. She made a gallant effort to face the issue which they had argued over and over again.

"It all happened just right that Mr. Becket was willing to come as mate," she began, "but

oh, the whole beautiful plan seems so empty without you, Davy. Why can't you sail with us? Grandfather says he will make you third mate at the end of this voyage. And you will be just drudging along in the *Roanoke* for years and years, before you can get that far."

"It is different with Mr. Becket," replied David, with a sigh. "He is almost fifty years old, and he needs a position. Besides, he stands a fine chance to be master of the *Sea Witch* when Captain John retires. But I am just beginning, and I belong in steam."

Margaret was unconvinced, as she looked up at him with affectionate pride.

"I suppose you know what is best, Davy, and I want you to succeed more than anything else in the world. Duty is a queer thing anyhow. The Cochrans think I ought to stay ashore and go to school. But I know better. There never was a wiser teacher than grandfather, and he needs me, and school must wait. And you and I could study together, Davy. Think of the months and months at sea."

"But it all comes down to this, Margaret. Answer me yes or no. Which course do you

want me to take? The one I *ought* to steer, or the one I *want* to follow? There's the whole thing in a nutshell."

She thought it cruel of him to pin her down to this kind of an answer, but she met his questions as squarely as Captain John would have done.

"The course you ought to steer, if you have to take one or the other," was her verdict.

"Then I go back to the *Roanoke*," declared David. "I've been veering this way and that in my mind, but the things I've learned about duty in the last year kind of help me to make a good finish of it. I must stick it out as I started. We sail in the morning, Margaret, and we may pass you going out. I can read any signals you set, and I'll know they are meant for me."

"'Don't forget your dearest folks,' will be what I'm saying to you, David," she answered, very softly.

David moved toward the companion-way. He saw how hard it was for Margaret to keep back her tears, now that the parting was so near.

"Don't forget me, little sister," he said, and his voice faltered. "I'll be waiting for you, forever and ever, amen."

He meant more than was in his words, for the "little sister" was dearer to him in this moment than she had ever been before. But he could not tell her what was in his heart. They went on deck as Captain Bracewell called out cheerily:

"I smell a shift of wind. We shall be under sail to-morrow. Why, the breeze has painted roses in your cheeks already, Margaret. There's nothing like getting to sea again. How about it, Davy Downes? Shall I put your name on the ship's papers?"

"No, sir. I am an able seaman aboard the *Roanoke*. And I'm sorry that I put you to the trouble of holding a berth open for me."

Captain Bracewell looked at the lad with approval, as he rejoined:

"It isn't always easy to get your true bearings, my boy, and maybe I did wrong in trying to persuade you to sail with an old fogy like me. We want you bad, but we're not going to stand in your way, hey, Margaret?"

The "little sister" had nothing more to say. Her bright world was clouded, and she could not look beyond this hour. It was Mr. Becket who cheered them with his never-failing good humor. Coming aft for orders, he stood surveying the silent group as if wondering what misfortune had happened in his absence.

"Cheer up, my children," was his exhortation. "You've got what you wanted, and what more do you want? Why, I didn't look as dismal as all this when my last skipper chased me ashore, with his one whisker whistlin' in the wind."

"David is going to leave us," said Margaret, solemnly.

"And what would we do with the useless little paint scrubber aboard a real ship?" exclaimed Mr. Becket. "He's never been aloft in his life."

"Get forward with you, Mr. Becket," thundered the captain, and the mate ducked down the ladder, as if he had been shot at. The time was all too short before the *Sea Witch* reached an anchorage in the lower bay. David was ready to leap aboard as the tug came along-

side. He was through with saying good-bys, and he lingered only long enough to shake hands all round.

Margaret and he had tried to console themselves with the thought that this was not really their last sight of each other. The liner would be going out in the morning, and then it would be farewell in earnest. But David was a lonesome and melancholy sailor as he went aboard the *Roanoke* that night. The bos'n found him on duty at the gangway, and took pity on his low spirits.

"It vas hard to lose friends, but it vas worse to have no friends to lose, and all hands on deck, from the old man to his sawed-off leetle cabin-boy knows that you haf been true to your friends and stuck by your colors, boy. It vill do you no harm. I vas getting old, and there is gray in my hair, and I vill never be a ship's officer. But if you does *your* duty and sticks by your friends you will wear the blue coat mit the brass stripes on the sleeve, and you will be glad you stayed by steam."

"But I always wanted to be the kind of a seaman my father was," confided David, grateful

for the cheer of this grizzled shipmate. "And I've just left that kind of a ship-master and a vessel that made me sort of choke all up to look at her."

Next morning came fair and sparkling, with a fresh wind out of the north-west that set the harbor to dancing. The liner's decks were crowded with passengers in holiday mood. From her huge funnels poured clouds of black smoke, to tell the water front that she was eager to be free and hurrying over seas. Promptly on the stroke of ten, as if she were moved by clock-work, the decks trembled to the thresh of her giant screws, hawsers came writhing in to the rattle of donkey-engines fore and aft, and the black hull of the liner slid slowly past her pier.

Up in the bow, able seaman David Downes waved his cap to Arthur Cochran who had come down to see him off. Their friendship had been knit closer by the sailing of the *Sea Witch*, and David glowed at the thought of the message which Mr. Cochran, senior, had sent to the steamer by his boy:

"Tell the able seaman that I wasn't as crazy as I seemed when I bought the *Sea Witch* over-

night. If he had wanted her for himself it would have been another matter. But I did it to please him as much as to please the old skipper and my boy. Tell him he has helped me to know what friendship means, in a world where I thought that kind of thing had gone out of style."

As the *Roanoke* neared Sandy Hook, David saw far ahead a row of tall spars astern of a tug. He forgot his work and rushed to the rail. It was the *Sea Witch*, and the liner would pass close to her. Soon little patches of white began to break out among the yards of the ship ahead. The bos'n stood beside David and growled in his ear:

"You must not loaf on deck, boy, but maybe a minute won't hurt nothings. It vas a good sight, that. I know it all. Now I hear the captain say to the mate, 'Set your jibs.' And next it is, 'Set your staysails.' And then it is, 'Loose your lower topsails.' Then the mate vill sing out to the men, 'Haul away the lee sail,' or 'Overhaul the main-top-gallant buntlines.' But I am an old fool and you are a young loafer. Get along mit you."

As if by magic, the white canvas was spreading higher and higher above the low hull of the *Sea Witch*, until her royals seemed like bits of the clouds that drifted in the blue sky. As David answered a summons from the bridge, he overheard Captain Thrasher say:

"Very smartly done. The old man must have shipped a good crew. Wonder where he got 'em? That's the way Yankee ships used to make sail when I was a boy."

David felt a thrill of pride as if he had a personal share in this welcome praise. The liner was overhauling the *Sea Witch* hand over hand. David was straining his eyes to make out the flutter of a skirt on the quarter-deck. The ship was still too far away, however, and his attention was caught for a moment by the surprised voice of the bos'n:

"Holy schmokes, your granddaddy is gettin' up his sky-sails. He vill give us a race, eh?"

Sure enough, the sailors of the *Sea Witch* could be seen working in mid-air, and presently the tiny squares of canvas gleamed above her royals. "It is to show this old

tea-kettle what a Yankee ship can do," quoth the bos'n.

No more stately and beautiful sea picture could be imagined than the *Sea Witch*, when Captain Bracewell had put her under this staggering press of sail. The wind was humming through the stays of the *Roanoke's* apologies for masts, and it smote the *Sea Witch* with a driving power, which heeled her until the copper of her hull gleamed like a belt of gold against the white-capped Atlantic.

David could see Margaret leaning against the weather rail of the poop, her hair blowing in the jolly wind, as she shaded her eyes and gazed at the liner's decks. Nor could this daughter of the deep sea have asked for a more fitting accompaniment for her farewell to David than the roaring chorus which floated from amidships of the *Sea Witch*. Captain Bracewell had bullied and bribed the shipping masters of New York to find him Yankee seamen. It was a hard task that he set them, but by hook and crook he had gathered a dozen deep-water "shell-backs" of the old breed among his thirty foremast hands, and they knew the old-

time sailors' chanties. Now, as they swayed and hauled on sheets and braces, their lusty chorus came faint and clear to the liner:

"Come all ye young fellows that follow the sea,
With a yeo, ho, blow the man down,
And pray pay attention and listen to me,
Oh, give me some time to blow the man down."

Soon the chorus changed as the topsail yards were swayed:

"We're outward bound this very day,
Good-by, fare you well,
Good-by, fare you well.
We're outward bound this very day,
Hurrah, my boys, we're outward bound."

The passengers of the liner were cheering. Here were sights and sounds which they had read about in romances of the sea. But David was no longer thinking of the ship yonder. He was blowing kisses to the "little girl" who had crossed the deck and was standing with one arm about the captain of the *Sea Witch*. Over their heads was set a row of signal flags to speak their parting message:

"All's well. Love and greetings."

Captain Thrasher turned his whistle valve, and the *Roanoke* bellowed a courteous "Good-day to you." Stronger and more musical than before came the sailors' chorus:

"Hurrah, my boys, we're outward bound."

Captain Thrasher chanced to catch a glimpse of the lad with the radiant face, who was leaning over the rail of the deck below him. With a kindly impulse, he sent a boy to call David to the bridge.

"You can see them a little better here," said the captain. "I take it that you're pretty sorry to leave those shipmates of yours. Did you want to go with them?"

The young able seaman stood very straight, and his square jaw was firm-set, as he replied:

"Yes, sir. But I decided to stay with you."

The captain of the liner understood the boy's struggle. He made no comment, but said to one of his officers:

"Tell the quartermaster to sheer a little closer to that ship. I may want to speak her."

David looked his gratitude, and was on edge with excitement, as he gazed down at the

white deck of the *Sea Witch*, and wondered if his voice could carry that far. Perhaps he might hear Margaret call to him. She had seen him go to the bridge. Her face was upturned, and she had picked up a speaking-trumpet.

Just then the fourth officer of the *Roanoke* brushed past David. He was bare-headed, his coat was torn, and there was blood on his face. He addressed the captain, as if short of breath:

"If you please, sir, two of those insane steerage passengers we are deporting have broken out, and are running amuck below. The rest of the people are scared clean off their heads, and I want more help to handle 'em."

The discipline which had become an instinct with Captain Thrasher caused him to grasp at whatever assistance was nearest to save every second of time he could. He saw David at his elbow, and snapped at him:

"Down you go! Jump! I'll send more help in a minute or two."

David cast one glance at the deck of the *Sea Witch*. Margaret had never looked so dear to

David gazed down at the white deck of the *Sea Witch*.

him as now, when she was almost within speaking distance. The pleading disappointment in David's face was not unobserved by Captain Thrasher, but his grim features were unmoved as he repeated, more sharply:

"Don't stand like a dummy! Below with you!"

A sweet, shrill hail came from the quarter-deck of the *Sea Witch*, "Oh, David, ahoy!"

David heard it, but he did not turn to look over the side. The doctrine of duty had never been so hard to swallow, but with his jaw set hard and his fists shut tight he ran after the fourth officer. A bedlam of noises came from the steerage quarters, groans and shrieks and prayers. Re-enforced by two more seamen, the officer and David charged into the uproar. Three stewards and a quartermaster had pinned the insane foreigners in a corner, and were trying to put strait-jackets on them. It was a difficult task, even with more help, and the panic of the other Hungarians, Russians, and Poles had grown to the size of a riot. David pitched in with the momentum of a centre-rush, and after several sharp tussles looked

around him to find that his doughty comrades had done their duty well. His impulse was to rush on deck for a sight of the *Sea Witch*, but his duty was to await orders.

"Stand guard over these poor lunatics till you are relieved," grunted the fourth officer.

David's face turned very red, he winked hard and tried to hold back the words that rushed to his lips:

"But I must go on deck, sir. I—I—" he broke off and steadied himself with a great effort. Before the amazed officer could reply to this mutinous outburst David had come to himself. Discipline and duty took command again, and he added in a tone of appeal:

"Please forget what I just said, sir. I didn't mean to talk back. Of course I'll stay."

The officer cast a sour look at the lad, as if in half a mind to punish him. Then with a gruff "Keep your tongue in your head next time," he went away.

David looked around at the speck of blue ocean which glinted through an open port-hole. Margaret's ship was out there, but he could not see her. Every moment the liner

and the *Sea Witch* were drawing farther and farther apart. And Margaret—was she looking for him, trying to send across the water her message: "Don't forget your dearest folks"?

The disconsolate David, sulking in the steerage, was not wise enough to know that in this trying hour he was doing that which would have made his "dearest folks" happy in this big boy of theirs.

When at length he climbed on deck, the stately *Sea Witch* was hull-down against the blue of the south-western sky. Lower and lower dropped the pyramid of sail, until a fleck of white hung for an instant on the horizon line. David rubbed his eyes, and looked again. The *Sea Witch* had vanished.

He turned away and looked up at the bridge of the *Roanoke*. Captain Thrasher was pacing his airy pathway, quiet, ready, masterful, while the strength of fifteen thousand horses drove the Black Star liner toward her goal. David Downes was sure in his heart that he had chosen the right way, although it was the hardest way. As the sun went down, he gazed

across the heaving sea where he had last glimpsed the *Sea Witch*, and said to himself:

"What I ought to do, not what I want to do: that is the course Captain John and Margaret told me to steer. And here is where I belong."

THE END

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